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Cover picture

Elevation of Nos. 39 and 41 Harrington Gardens by the architects Ernest George and Peto, 1882-3. The drawing is reproduced from *Survey of London, Volume XLII: Southern Kensington: Kensington Square to Earl's Court*, which is published under the general editorship of Hermione Hobhouse, and will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

In search of the Thatcher factor

Peter Jay

ALAN WALTERS
Britain's Economic Renaissance: Margaret Thatcher's reforms 1979-1984
200pp. Oxford University Press. £19.50.
019 537391

Sir Alan Walters is a British academic economist who took an early interest in Milton Friedman's "monetarist" theories before they were fashionable, who served as a personal economic "advisor" [sic] to Mrs Thatcher at 10 Downing Street from 1981 and who has since been based in Washington, as a resident-fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, a respectable and well-endowed lobby for right-wing economic ideology. Not surprisingly his book is designed to show that his theories were right, that his leader deserves the political credit for implementing them in defiance of a lamentable inheritance and a hostile "ambient" academic culture and that, in consequence, Britain has enjoyed "a minor economic miracle".

Readers of *Britain's Economic Renaissance* are warned in the prologue that "there are no revelations in this book. It is neither a diary nor a denouement. It is just a plain old piece of applied economics." The negatives are true; the positive is false. It is a plain old piece of political propaganda, written in the style of British casual empiricism at its most casual and least empirical. Thus, for example: "We are left, therefore, with no simple explanations of Britain's productivity. There must be some missing factor - a Thatcher factor? - which explains this dramatic reversal in Britain's performance." Or, "There remains the Thatcher factor - the compendium of ambient macroeconomic stability and microeconomic reform. On general grounds it seems likely, to put it no higher, that productivity must respond favourably under conditions of increased stability and freedom." Or, "This view [that a cure may have been found for the British disease] has been reinforced by many anecdotes from British boardrooms and managers and even the shopfloor".

Sir Alan's writing style is accessible to all, though his intermittent American spelling - "favorable" but also "favourably"; and vocabulary - "envision" (used interchangeably with "envisage"); his chronically split infinitives - "to more than counter"; and his other solecisms (Sir Harold McMillan) may not suit every-

one's taste. The book, indeed, is the kind of extended essay that a busy man, who has already made his reputation, who knows what he thinks and that what he thinks must be basically right and who is under pressure from his publisher to produce "a title" and from his sponsor to advance "the cause", may be expected to write.

The propaganda thrust of the work is threefold: that "monetarist" macroeconomics, combined with market-based microeconomics, is intellectually superior to "post-Keynesian" or "fiscalist" macroeconomics and "interventionist" microeconomics; that Mrs Thatcher, in

lower level of unemployment than would otherwise occur.

I shall leave it to the "post-Keynesians" and "fiscalists", who are much better qualified both technically and by conviction, to do battle with Sir Alan over his arguments with them about the comparative effects of fiscal and monetary expansion on real economic activity. But, more seriously for him, he will have also to deal with the embarrassment of the Chancellor's having, since his 1985 Mansion House speech, abandoned the fundamental tenets of Friedman's monetarism and, in his 1986 budget, implicitly embraced much of the "post-



"The Biddenden Maids' Chanty", given on Easter Monday, reproduced from *The Customs and Ceremonies of Britain: An encyclopaedia of living traditions* by Charles Lighty (248pp. Thames and Hudson. £12.50, 0 500 25096 0).

the grip of these convictions, turned the direction of British policy from the one to the other; and that the result has been the "Renaissance" of the title and the "miracle" of the concluding chapter.

Since the last two and parts of the first of these contentions are rubbish, it is as well first to acknowledge what is true, if scarcely as controversial or unpopular as Sir Alan's portrayal of himself as a David surrounded by Goliaths invites us to suppose. It is true that, if government print too much money, inflation will in due course follow; and it is true that printing too much money does not secure a sustainably

Keynesian compromise that both Sir Alan and I deplore. (Mrs Thatcher's recent speech in Perth he will no doubt also find difficult to justify.)

Sir Alan's interpretation of monetarist macroeconomics is heretical and invites the suspicion that it has been doctored to rationalize the actions of the Government he served. For example, he presents, as Ministers did, as the centre piece of the Government's plans for "macroeconomic stability" the Medium Term Financial Strategy, whose "objective was primarily the reduction in the rate of inflation"; and he does not disguise the fact that the pro-

gressive reduction of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (that is, the budget deficit as currently interpreted) was the essence of that strategy. Yet, there is absolutely nothing in Friedman's monetarism to suggest that the size of the budget deficit is the determining factor for inflation or even very important at all. On the contrary, monetarist doctrine has seen the rate of change in the money supply as the decisive factor and budget deficits as important only in so far as governments fail to cover them by genuine borrowing rather than by printing money.

The massive explosion of the money supply in Mrs Thatcher's first year, and the simultaneous leap in inflation from an inherited 8 per cent to something over 20 per cent, were not the acts of a "monetarist" administration, though they were not incompatible with the principles of the embryonic MTFs, as finally launched publicly in March, 1980. There are good and powerful arguments for limiting the public sector's claims on private savings - chiefly, that funding them by genuine borrowing will drive up interest rates and "crowd out" other, possibly more fruitful, private borrowing; but they have nothing to do with fighting inflation or with monetarism in its proper and valid sense.

Similarly, Sir Alan plays fast and loose with the very concept of market-based microeconomics. We may presume that his own approach is based on broad classical principles, judging by his statement in the preface that

the errors of received doctrine are simple and basic rather than sophisticated and esoteric. Similarly the reform of ideas and policy owes much to the central propositions of the theory of demand and supply and little to explorations in mathematics and econometrics.

So, what are we to make of his contention, unsupported even by footnotes, that "both experience and scholarly study had shown that the state industries were overmanned and tended to be used by powerful unions and other special interests for extortion and political purposes. The general policy of the government was to return these industries to the people" (a somewhat less than clinical description of denationalization)?

What classical principles actually said was rather different. Both private enterprise, under conditions of perfect competition, as well as public ownership of monopolies, offered acceptable models of efficient economic operation and accountability to the people, whether as consumers or as voters. But

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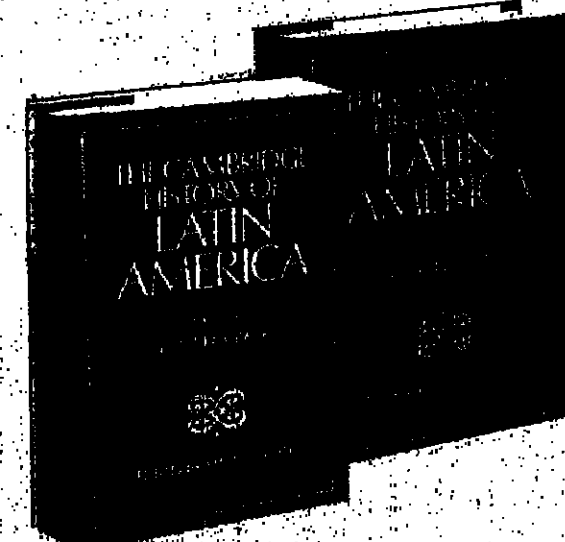
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private monopoly, it argued, was unacceptable at any price. In so far as the privatization programme had the purpose and result of creating, not private competitive markets, but private monopolies, it was flying in the face of the central propositions of classical theory on which Sir Alan purports to have relied.

These would be less damaging distortions were it not that their effect is to give credence to Sir Alan's most pernicious notion, namely that the ideologies and programmes of political parties are rooted in coherent economic philosophies which, give or take a bit, they may be expected to implement. This is dangerous nonsense, since, as he ought to know as a member in good standing of the American academic radical right, political parties are more accurately regarded as vendors in the electoral market-place, whose programmes reflect a balance between the vested interests of their hard-core supporters and the compromises called for by their more prudent electoral agents in order to attract floating voters.

Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Party is no more actuated by a coherent economic philosophy of market forces when it hands over vast monopolies at attractive prices to its supporters than the Labour Party is motivated by some coherent philosophy of workers' liberation when it confers lop-sided legal immunities upon trade unions.

It is this same urge on Sir Alan's part to justify, not merely his convictions, but also his Party, which leads him to misrepresent grotesquely the history of the birth of monetarism as a government programme in Britain. He presents 1979 as the watershed year, simply because there was then a change of government. As Samuel Brittan pointed out in his *The Role and Limits of Government* (1983), "if one looks at broad strategy and at actions rather than political rhetoric, it is clear that the fundamental change in policy took place not after the election, but in 1976, less than halfway through the term of the Labour Government".

Sir Alan's cruder claims for the originality of 1979 are planted where the casual reader is most likely to find them, on the dust-jacket, in the prologue and in the conclusions:

As the recession intensified in 1980-1 Margaret Thatcher took a bold departure from the traditional dogma of the prevailing Keynesian economic doctrine: she did not increase the fiscal deficit to "increase aggregate demand" ... she did exactly the opposite.

Mrs Thatcher's government of 1979-83 was only the start of this long programme of reform.

The first main change in the economic environment of 1979-83 was the commitment to contain inflation by the MTFs. The main lesson - still rather tentative - is the power of monetary policy compared with the relative impotence of, in Keynesian terms, even perverted, the effects of fiscal policy.

The decline of Keynesianism and the rise of monetarism as the principle of macroeconomic policies actually occurred much earlier and had nothing to do with the ebb and flow of party politics. (It had even less to do with Margaret Thatcher, who was one of the latest and least perfect converts, always preferring her grocer's daughter's microeconomic reflexes and values to any economic theory.) It was James Callaghan's budget of 1967 which actually first broke explicitly and obviously from the Keynesian "full employment" standard for what was then called the "budget judgment" and provoked a leader in *The Times*, whose Economics Editor I was at the time, called "The End of the Keynesian Era". From 1968 onwards first *The Times* and then the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* began seriously discussing Friedman's ideas and reporting monetary aggregate statistics.

The first signs that any of this was getting through to the politicians came in Denis Healey's crucially important speech in East London in January 1975, when he expounded the central idea of Friedman's justly celebrated 1968 Presidential Address to the American Economic Association. This idea was that monetary policy must be geared uniquely to a progressive reduction of inflation, and that any reduction in unemployment must come from somehow moderating the growth of real pay. This turned the conventional post-war approach to incomes policies (namely that the benefit of pay restraint was to be shared) on its head by gearing fiscal and monetary

policy to an inflation rather than an employment standard and linking pay policy and behaviour to employment rather than inflation.

This, of course, is the approach which Sir Alan himself favours analytically, though he has no time for government exhortation of commands to achieve the reduction in real pay which he rightly sees as the key to higher employment. But, if he had understood better what Healey had said in 1975 and the Labour Government's subsequent successful anti-inflation policy and fairly unsuccessful employment policy between 1976 and 1979, he would neither have misplaced by three or four years the real watershed in British macroeconomic policy nor have had to profess himself so utterly baffled - "I can find no plausible explanation for the increases in real pay" - about pay behaviour in the present decade and the consequent high unemployment.

If Healey was the first, he was followed soon after by Sir Keith Joseph's great "recantation" speech and by Callaghan's definitive burial of demand management. "We cannot now, if we ever could, spend our way out of recession" - at the Labour Party Conference, of all places, in the autumn of 1976. This is the speech Friedman has most frequently quoted with approval of any delivered by any politician anywhere. The words were followed by deeds almost precisely such as Friedman recommended at the time, namely by a progressive reduction over three years in the rate of increase in the money supply (as then universally measured), which brought inflation down from the 30 per cent inherited from Edward Heath's and Anthony Barber's monetary explosion between 1971 and 1974 to the single figures bequeathed to Mrs Thatcher. Unemployment certainly rose sharply, though not as sharply as in the 1980s when no concerted attempt was made to discourage workers from pricing themselves out of their jobs.

In the smaller print of his book, where casual readers are less likely to find it, Sir Alan does in fact acknowledge some of this:

In 1975-6, for example, Britain witnessed the development of monetary targets and the eschewing of finely tuned fiscal policy. The Medium Term Financial Strategy of the government of Mrs Thatcher was a logical descendant (sic) of the brave measures of Mr Healey.

Unemployment did stop rising [in 1979] ... Whether this slight improvement was due to the fiscal measures of 1978 [which Sir Alan does not believe] or whether it was the result of the early and "successful" stages of incomes policy that had been so prominent a part of the 1976 policy must be left to conjecture.

Even here, Sir Alan, anxious as ever to make his Party points, tries to attribute the intellectual conversion of 1975-6 to pressures from the IMF at the end of 1976; and when he has to concede that the IMF's approach had been "anticipated ... some months earlier", it is to the Treasury rather than to ministers that he awards the credit.

But the most seriously false message of the whole book is the suggestion in the title and, somewhat more tentatively, in the text, that Britain has enjoyed a "minor miracle", and, perhaps, found the cure for the "British disease".

Sir Alan's essential case is this: sound financial policies have been followed, accompanied by privatization, deregulation and trade union legislation; inflation has fallen to 5 per cent (he glosses over the monetary chaos of Mrs Thatcher's first year, by blaming the 20 per cent inflation which accompanied it on the post-Winter of Discontent pay settlements which were "in the pipeline", although he admits that it was his heroine's pre-election pledge to honour these, as well as her actual decision to do so; which caused the damage); and productivity in manufacturing, which he takes as a proxy for the economy as a whole, has risen impressively in the present decade in contrast with the 1970s. He blames the high unemployment on excessive real pay, which he professes himself unable to explain, except on the "speculation" that workers have overestimated probable future inflation and even this he admits is implausible after the rate of inflation settled down three years ago at about 3 per cent.

In his enthusiasm to prove a miracle, Sir Alan seems to have forgotten that the only claim itself was: namely, how to combine a high

level of employment with stability of prices. Every government since the wartime coalition's Employment Policy White Paper, and indeed long before, has known that you could achieve price stability by accepting very high levels of unemployment. Their delusion, until the monetarist revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s, was to think that you could achieve high employment by accepting stable, if high, levels of inflation.

Once it was realized that the price to be paid was not a level, but a rate of acceleration, of inflation, the notion of a fiscally guaranteeable high employment level collapsed. What the change of strategy since 1975-6 (not 1979) has meant is that governments simply have to embrace, having little choice, a high level of unemployment. The real problem is why, in Britain, such a high level of unemployment should be associated with financial stability. The answer, clearly enough, lies in the monopolistic price-setting of labour, reinforced by all the other cartels and competitive imperfections of the still hidebound British economy - for example that after nearly seven years of Mrs Thatcher's government, we still do not have even the ghost of a serious anti-trust, or competition, law.

What Sir Alan refuses to face - and hence his great bafflement about the behaviour of real pay - is that no serious structural changes have been introduced to make the supply of labour any less monopolistic. Of course actual labour prices advance less rapidly so long as government does not print the money to validate excessive rises; but the consequence is that the labour market does not clear or, in other words, that unemployment rises to a very high level and stays there. To interpret the evidence of tamer pay behaviour in a buyer's market for labour as evidence that such behaviour would continue once a seller's market was created is to fall into the classic error of confusing movement along a curve with an actual shift in the curve itself.

The government's trade-union legislation, necessary and benign as it may have been in terms of members' civil rights and of the emancipation of the Labour Party leadership from dark forces, has left the basic structure of conventional collective bargaining untouched. And it is conventional collective bargaining, not "loony left" excess, which is the essence of monopolistic labour supply.

No matter how fast productivity advances,

How we beat us

Adam Hodgkin

STEVEN LUKES and ITZHAK GALNOOR
No Laughing Matter: A collection of political jokes
177pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £7.95.
0710099657

In their brief introduction, Steven Lukes and Itzhak Galnoor quote Mark Twain to the effect that a German joke is no laughing matter. In his brief foreword, George Mike says that it is about time that jokes, particularly political jokes, were taken seriously. This anthology of 500 political jokes might form the raw material for some theoretical study of the form and function of humour in politics, but this is not Lukes and Galnoor's intention. Like an experienced after-dinner speaker, they know that it is their task to get on with the entertainment after a minimum of preamble and apparatus.

The jokes are collected under five principal headings: "Politics and Joking", "Boundaries and Identity", "Debunking and Unmaking", "Power and Resistance", and "Facts of Life". The last is a useful portmanteau into which the compilers can be expected to stuff any good things which did not fit in earlier, as well as one or two which rather clearly do belong elsewhere in the book. As, for example, the reported conversation between two Soviet Jews after the Six Day War (they did you hear how we beat us?). This is about the optimum number of jokes in the book, and we may be

even supposing that it could be sustained on the marginal 10 per cent of the available labour forces was re-employed, no progress at all would have been made towards solving the problem of restoring high employment without relaunching inflation. Nor does the plausible fact that the economy, having once got down to - or near to - the "natural" rate of unemployment, can bump along the bottom, with annual rises in national output in line with the gains in productivity growth, provide any evidence whatever of recovery, let alone a renaissance, in the only sense which is relevant to the problem as posed: how to restore high employment without inflation.

Sir Alan is absolutely right to see the key as being pay behaviour, as did Healey and Callaghan in 1975 and 1976. But simply to profess himself mystified about why pay does not now behave in the way in which it would have to behave for his thesis of "miracle" to succeed is hardly an argument for saying that it has succeeded or is succeeding. That behaviour - and what it would be under conditions of high employment - is the problem.

An economist who says he cannot understand it, who rules out any form of concerted pay restraint and who has no radical structures to propose - for example of the kind discussed by James Meade, Martin Weitzman and others for giving employees a large stake in the profits (or lack of them) of enterprises, in lieu of some of their fixed pay - cannot claim to have addressed, let alone to have solved, or to have advised a government which has solved the problem. Meanwhile, the cost of not finding a solution is that a tenth or a fifth of the Gross National Product is not being produced every year because of the need to run the economy indefinitely at a "natural rate of employment". This is equivalent to producing at about 80 per cent of full economic capacity. A solution would be enough to solve virtually all other known material problems confronting the nation.

This is neither a miracle nor a renaissance, it is a tragedy and a treason; and this 1976-86 economic experiment has nothing useful to do with party politics. Whereas it is the job of politicians to play electoral games for office and success, it is the job of economists to produce solutions to the problems of government and society. So far, they have failed; and Sir Alan's political panegyric can only divert them from their task.

grateful to the editors for having interpreted their subject broadly, since it is obviously more important to have samples of a good vintage than to be restricted to the narrowly political. There are many more jokes about Soviet leaders than about American Presidents, and precious few about British ministers - only two mentions of Gerald Ford, none at all of Churchill. These omissions cannot be simply explained by the fact that this is not a collection of political wit or anecdote. There are plenty of good jokes for which Churchill was the target or the source. The anthology contains more mentions of Brezhnev than of Khrushchev, and, since there are more Khrushchev jokes than Stalin jokes, one is tempted to suppose that a dictator's propensity to be the butt of humour and mockery is inversely related to his vividness. This is corroborated by the presence of jokes about such otherwise forgettable and grey characters as Salazar, Vostok and Pape d'opoles.

Many good jokes have the wisdom of riddles. I enjoyed the Soviet satirical classifications of schools of painters. The impressionist paints what he feels, the Impressionist paints what he sees, and the socialist realist paints what he hears. Not so funny, but quite sharp, is the joke with which they conclude the book: Question: Will there be a Third World War? Answer: No, but there will be such a struggle for peace that not a stone will be left standing.

Lukes and Galnoor have collected some good jokes but it may be that their book is also a missed opportunity. This subject is not simply a laughing matter. An analytical essay might have shown the role of joking in the political world and how it has been a vital world taking

Unreal city

Peter Hall

ANDREW LEES
Cities Perceived: Urban society in European and American thought, 1820-1940
360pp. Manchester University Press, £25.
070917254

EDWARD KRUPAT
People in Cities: The urban environment and effects
215pp. Cambridge University Press, £27.50 (paperback, £8.95).
0521265444

KENNETH FOX
Metropolitan America: Urban life and urban policy in the United States 1940-1980
274pp. Macmillan, £25 (paperback, £7.95).
0301333152

In *Cities Perceived* Andrew Lees reminds us that, in any given period, a few sensitive Americans have always become estranged from their own cities. Henry James, perhaps the most distinguished of them, gazed with distaste at the turn of the century on the new skyscrapers that had transformed his native New York. He found them "crowded not only with no history, but with no possibility of time for history, and consecrated by no uses save the commercial at my cost". And, nearly thirty years earlier, he had already been sufficiently alienated to take up an almost permanent exile in London, a metropolis he found infinitely more congenial. By 1905 James had, perhaps unconsciously, in part absorbed the hostility to new urban development then fashionable in Europe, though he of his compatriots shared his concern. Most American cities were then so new that they did not convey the feelings of aesthetic and cultural decline that so obsessed contemporary observers in Britain, Germany and France. Paris fascinated Baudelaire, because it was physical and moral degradation provided white raw material for his art; for Walt Whitman, New York provided an entirely opposite stimulus of "continued exaltation and absolute fulfillment". Apart from lone voices, such as James's, it is not until the publication of Lewis Mumford's *The Culture of Cities* (1938) that we find New York inspiring a vision of the insane commercial megalopolis, marked by "sprawl and shapelessness as an inevitable by-product of its physical immensity", and portraying the triumph of totalitarian militarism. And Mumford, like James before him, found in London or Paris or Rome some vestiges of an earlier urban golden age.

Then and since, opinions have differed. Edward Krupat, a psychologist, shows in *People in Cities* that contemporary visions of New York are highly subjective, ranging from the ecstatic to the execratory. One observer is "more comfortable in a subway than a field"; Dr Krupat, who once enjoyed it, tells us that he now finds it too hectic. He believes that it depends on what you are used to - if you like a lot of stress anyway, somewhere like New York is the place for you. But that would have been as true in 1886 as in 1986. The really interesting question is when and why images of the city change. Professor Lees addresses this question as a historian and concludes that attitudes were seldom so clear-cut; most observers have reacted to big cities to some extent negatively and to some extent positively. Writers, artists, clergymen and doctors tended to be against; social scientists and architect-planners were more willing to accept the city as it was, while trying at the same time to improve it. Attacking the city's evils, cultural conservatives like William Morris, Oswald Spengler and James made common cause with left-wing writers from Engels to Orwell; the defenders were mainly found in the ideological centre. Germany produced the most passionate anti-urban feeling. Britain the next, France less so, America the least of all. And anti-urban feeling ran in cycles: strong in the 1840s and the 1880s and the interwar years, less so in the periods in between.

Krupat divides these categories; his personal typology is in a timeless continuum. Crowding, pollution, commuting can all create stress. But whether people become stressed will depend on the people themselves. Callaghan's celebrated laboratory rats all behaved calmly when they were crowded together in a small pen. But, as Amos Rapoport

pointed out, the recommended minimum standard of housing in the United States is 340 square feet per person, while in Europe it is 170, and in Hong Kong 43 is thought quite reasonable. He might equally have noticed that the Lower East Side of New York in the 1890s had 500,000 inhabitants to the square mile, so that it was populated at least as densely as Hong Kong today. Circumstances alter cases. But whether people like or hate their cities can have profound effects for the society and for its politics. That has been nowhere truer than in America since the Second World War, and it may be becoming equally true in Britain. Kenneth Fox is a political scientist and the central theme of his history, *Metropolitan America*, is an important one, as much for a British as for an American readership: it is an account of the development, during the 1960s and 1970s, of an urban crisis in American society and politics.

In the 1950s, America underwent a huge transformation: the old division between a white-collar business class and a much larger blue-collar working class was superseded by the development of a new suburban middle class, distinguished no longer by occupation but by "life style", above all by its concern with child-rearing and the material symbols of affluence. Still, the cities remained serene and stable places - as can be seen in Edward Hopper's contemporary paintings of New York scenes. But that, as Professor Fox puts it, was before the deluge.

By the end of the decade suburbanization had left a new underclass, predominantly black, trapped in the old inner cities. And in the 1960s it erupted in riots. Fox reviews the official explanations of the time, and offers his own interpretation: he believes that the riots were about status and power. Edward Banfield's celebrated (but not here cited) article, "Rioting Mainly for Fun and Profit", is both near and wide of the mark: blacks enjoyed the fact that they were centre-stage, and they were determined to show that they were able to influence events. The outcome of the riots was not black invasion of the white suburbs, but black control of the cities. Subsequently, President Johnson tried to enlist a constituency of poor urban blacks to reconstruct their own cities through local community development; Presidents Nixon and Ford went along with this approach, because they saw it as the way to shift the burden of urban revival from central government in Washington to the cities themselves. The new aim was the co-operation of public and private in pursuit of urban economic development: an approach that made traditional town planners decidedly uncomfortable.

The story of urban Britain in the 1980s is uncannily similar to that of urban America in the 1970s. This makes Fox's final chapter especially arresting. The outward movement of people and jobs has created an America of almost uniform suburbanization, in which the older inner cities perform at most a specialized role. The US economy is becoming diffused rather than concentrated, geographically - as is symbolized by the new electronic cottage industry. Society is marked by a disintegration of traditional class structures and gender roles. Within it, there is a new underclass of young unemployed blacks and poor single mothers. By May 1983, with overall unemployment at just under 10 per cent, black teenage unemployment was nearly 47 per cent. These young blacks, Fox explains, were looking for jobs which did not exist. Single-parent families, a prominent feature for several decades past, increased among blacks during the 1970s from 0.9 to 1.9 million; among whites, where they had been proportionately far less common, they doubled from 2.0 to 3.9 million. The result was: what sociologists have come to call the feminization of poverty; a product of the absence of two incomes, continuing sexual pay differences, and child care demands. The new diffused economy (including the electronic cottage industry) has not yet evolved to meet the capabilities and needs of the new female population. Meanwhile it was a Democratic administration, under President Carter, that achieved the extraordinary feat of publicly abandoning America's cities to their historic fate. A major policy report of 1978 concluded that, rather than trying to arrest the decline of the cities, public policy should actually assist it: limited federal funds should be used to speed the transfer of funds to the states.

sition to a post-industrial economy, in which shrunken cities would play their new role as nodal centres for the performance of specialized functions such as financial services, education and government. The big city mayors, naturally, were less than pleased. But, as Fox acknowledges in the title of his closing chapter, Carter was simply recognizing that the cities were now a spent force, of little political value and that the time had come to say goodbye to Metropolis.

Professor Fox's book ends at 1980. But an appendix would not tell any new story. The fact is that progressively, since the late 1960s, American governments of both political persuasions have quietly been leaving the cities to go their own way. Fewer and fewer Americans live, work and above all vote in them. More and more Americans regard them as outdated: the residual repositories of the unsuccessful, the poor, the problematic. Anti-urbanism, once a European affectation, has now become the all-pervasive American attitude.

The same of course is increasingly true on the other side of the Atlantic. In Britain, too - even though it is some years behind America - there is a diffuse economy and a new class basis to society, in which the cities represent an embarrassing historical relic. These changes, as in America, have a crucial political expression: Labour's vote in 1983 had, in the main, shrunk to a declining urban base, while the Conservatives and the Alliance fought over the suburbs and the exurbs. The abolition of the Greater London Council and the Metropolitan Counties, and the increasingly ferocious battles between Westminster and the big cities, represent the last act of a great political drama that began with the enfranchisement of the new industrial towns a century and half ago. Britain, too, may be about to bid goodbye to Metropolis.

The Shelton Hotel, New York, reproduced from *The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe* by Jan Garden Castro, to be published on June 12 (1986), with more than 70 colour illustrations. Virago, £20.00 (ISBN 0 86088 737 6). As well as letters and interviews this study of O'Keeffe's life and work includes many photographs of her at various stages of her life by Alfred Sieglitz.

June Books

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Hodder & Stoughton

The traveller as trickster

Gerald Mangan

ARTELLA COURT
Puck of the Droms: The lives and literature of
the Irish Tinkers
297pp. University of California Press. £21.25.
0520 037111

As itinerant workers and traders, singers and musicians, craftsmen and beggars, tellers of tales and fortunes, the tinkers or "travelling people" have for long occupied a place in Irish society (and in rural Scotland) roughly equivalent to that of the gypsy in England. Their role has often been more conspicuous and controversial, and they have suffered more from official harassment than commercial romanticization; but the cultural heritage of this self-styled "puck of the droms" (trickster of the roads) is also much more indigenously Celtic, and its links with the Romany tradition are demonstrably tenuous. As the custodians of a vanishing native folklore, they have been recognized by Irish scholars more than by Gypsy specialists; but a separate survey of their lives and literature has long been overdue.

Puck of the Droms fills a large part of the gap. The three oral memoirs that make up the best part of it were recorded by American folklorist Arrella Court during visits to Ireland between 1965 and 1973, and the delay in publication is not fully explained by the fifty pages of introduction, or the ninety pages of glossary and notes. In the interval, so much of integrity and vitality has gone from the traveller communities, whose bough-tents are now invaded by colour televisions, that the material enshrined here may have been gathered in the nick of time. It is a monumental work, which already looks like a monument over a communal grave.

The longest of the three autobiographies is given by Patrick Stokes, a Roscommon-born labourer and former tinsmith, then in his thirties, living with his wife and five daughters in a sack-tent outside Dublin. Drawing on a typically elastic memory, which enables him to reproduce the precise words of a conversation twenty years old, he gives a fluent and highly entertaining account of his life as a tin-trader, cow-herd, roof-thatcher, poacher, thief, tippler and self-confessed liar. ("If you have the name of being an early riser", he begins, "you can sleep forever. I often told a man the truth, and he wouldn't believe me.")

Enlivened by a truly puckish sense of logic, Stokes's monologue offers a striking example of a rural imagination that lives simultaneously in fact and fiction; in present and past; and he is a master of a whole range of narrative devices that present magical folktales as episodes of first-hand experience. Ghosts are as real a menace as tent-fires, rats and municipal bulldozers, and are often more comprehensible than the insults of policemen, the rapacity of landowners, the spite of bureaucrats or the parsimony of the clergy.

In their attitudes to the values of the "settled" community, the other memoirs represent two opposing extremes. A former hawkerwoman descended from a Wicklow farmer, Bridget Murphy is the only householder, and devout Catholic of the three, and she gives a more drily factual account of her early hardships on the road. Her pragmatism is probably coloured by a need to justify her reversion to settled ways, and it contrasts sharply with the stubborn pride of the oldest narrator. The life-story of Johnny Cassidy, a Wexford storyteller from a long line, is little more than the history of a life of stories, and a preface to the six tales he produces from his repertoire. Religiously revered and regularly aired, his literary inheritance is plainly his real ancestral home, far more valuable and secure than the sheet-metal hut that houses his brood of children.

Stories and songs from a variety of traveller sources are interpolated, in italics, throughout the first two memoirs. They are often placed quite clumsily, breaking the flow of an anecdote where they mean to enlarge its significance, but they are the richest feature of the book, and alone would provide a detailed picture of traveller customs, occupations, beliefs and fantasies. In one of the best-known stories, their history of misfortunes is traced back to a tinker who made the nails for the Crucifixion.

but the predominant type is one in which cunning or sheer luck enables the trickster hero to outwit a figure of authority or brute power - a giant, a ghost, a priest, a landowner, an Englishman, and so on. Apart from celebrations of confidence-scams and clan-battles, such wish-fulfillment is more rare in the songs, which conform to the more familiar Irish modes of yearning and regret. Many of the ballads reprinted here, of courtship and bereavement and homesickness ("Carrickfergus", "Molly Bawn"), have long been classics of the folk repertoire.

Court tells us that she approached the families "as an amateur, in friendship", and I would imagine that she conversed with them in tones rather different from her introduction. In her meticulous account of their lives, which includes their diet and personal hygiene as well as trade-routes, marriage-customs, superstitions and family rivalries, her obvious sympathy is submerged by a rather strenuous professional formality, and too much of it is a polysyllabic translation of what they themselves state quite plainly.

Speculating on the tinkers' historical origins, she is well-informed but elaborately cautious. She chooses a plausible starting-point in the dissolution of the ancient Celtic hierarchies,

which made fellow-outcasts of the exalted bard and the lowly metal-worker, but the argument is confused by the more recent history of colonial exploitation, which reduced the entire peasantry to the status of nomads and mendicants. Unlike the founding-fathers of the Free State, she is quite certain that their roots are Irish, but the strongest proof she can find is in their secret language of Shelta, known to be a cleverly garbled form of Gaelic. In the end, she is unable to discount the evidence of Romany affinities, which she sums up as "an aversion to landedness, candour, assimilation and alphabet".

The voluminous notes by specialist scholars help to make this look like the definitive source-work on the subject; but I was surprised, as a non-specialist, by one or two failures of attribution. A version of the tale of a cuckolded cowherd, told by Stokes, can be found in Bocaccio's *Decameron*; and a long episode in the story of "The White Gallows", told by Cassidy, appears almost verbatim in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Tinder Box".

The glossary is useful at times, although I suspect that many of its definitions (for example, of pub, banknote, boss, smart, hell for leather, are) will seem superfluous even to the most American of American readers.

Craft couple in Cornwall

A race run by the wind for a smock, all night. I see
You hanging out your dresses by the light of the moon.
Your husband has a beard like a bass brown humming
All over his cheeks. He crosses himself at a tiny vitrine
With the figure of the Pietà in frosted glass, tit,
Brow, tit, left shoulder, right shoulder, left tit,
Brow, which is a star and not a cross, when he sees her
Hanging out her racing dresses in the breezes
Of moonlight. He makes a brooch: a vampire bat
Hugging a black obsidian to its pointed chest.

And this is the outcome of the struggle
Of the Church against the cult of water and the night sky:
Shaping a wet star in touch upon his torso. Stones
He snaps into their inner firmament, and plants
The flints round the garden in a star, where the dresses blow
And the flowers blow too, implicating all who come
In their perfume. I often see them
On his motorbike, iron maiden roaring between his knees,
The roaring girl, his Black Goddess from Japan
Transporting her suppliants; on weekends in the town
They lose themselves in an arcade with 200 pinball
Machines. He often worships in the garden
At the vitrine set into its flint wall.
These flints open too into their daylight blue,
Open like the flowers showing an inner sky
Which is perfumed, as her dresses are
From her inner sky, excited by their ride;
She pins them to the line without their aid.

She makes sinister pin-money as beautician
To the undertaker, and he remarks how shampoo
Never takes right on a corpse's hair
Unless her white hands zest the foam; and how
The dead draw down the flies, as if on strings.
Unless she washes them, and stars himself
At their privilege and funeral radiance.
Once they found an empty coffin beached
Like a rowboat on the mudbanks, and re-used it.
For love-letters and stock; it brimmed with brooches
He hit on a new design; a Medusa brooch
With white hands on wriggling arms instead of snakes.

PETER REIDGROVE

A mater's mak'-ye' ups

Anne Smith

EWAN MACCOLL and PEGGY SEEGER
Till Domsday in the Afternoon
325pp. Manchester University Press. £25.
07190 18137

The Stewarts of Blairgowrie have become well known in folk song and folklore circles as transmitters of traditional Scottish ballads and songs. Belle Stewart, the *materfamilias* - she presides over an extended family of twenty-five - has added notably to the canon with songs of her own composition. The Stewarts belong to that group of compulsive travellers who used to be called, indiscriminately and pejoratively, "tinkers" or "gypsies".

Originally Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger planned only to compile a collection of songs and ballads from the Travellers' repertoire, but as they transcribed the recordings of their sessions with the Stewarts, they began to envisage a different kind of book altogether, one which would present an accurate picture of a traditional culture operating within the confined space of a family circle. What they do not show is the context of that culture. The practicalities of the Travellers' way of life apart, much of it is indistinguishable from that of the ordinary working-class Lowland Scot who for most of the period covered was only marginally less poor than the Travellers themselves. The Travellers are distinguished from the Lowland Scot, though, by their use of cant, a jargon which Belle Stewart describes as "something that was added to the English". It takes the syntax and grammar of English as its base and adds words of diverse origin, "archaic Gaelic words and phrases, debased Latin and French words, words borrowed from Roman, Arabic and half-a-dozen other languages and dialects", as well as "hundreds of words borrowed from the artificially created 'thieves' jargon'".

When the authors showed the Stewarts Dekker's *Gull Homebooks* (1609), "they experienced little difficulty in... understanding the canting songs printed therein". A conversation among the Stewarts is translated to demonstrate: "Ay, they glib at the darkest but they dinnae mang that the vavver demment" - "Yes, they say that tonight, but they didn't say that the other night." Cant apart, the Stewarts speak the dialect of the eastern Lowland Scot. Similarly, their family structure and intense loyalties are virtually an exact reflection of those of the ordinary Scot from the same area. MacColl and Seeger seem not to realize this - or perhaps they have not appreciated the need for cross-reference to a background which would have valuable set the Stewarts in context.

Till Domsday is, with these reservations, a fascinating book. The Stewarts had wonderfully varied working lives: "He was pipper to Lord Dudley of Dunkeld. He'd go down in the morning and play round the big house and he'd be back at night playin' round the dinner-table. Between he'd be up and down the glass selling dishes." There are passing references to having "I've seen my brother Donald get my granny that drunk that she couldnae licht her pipe". "Even the bairns smoked pipes long ago." The introductory section contains all this anecdotal material, illustrative of the Travellers' way of life. The bulk of the book is divided into sections on the cant (with a glossary); folk songs which are quite disappointingly derivative and poorly structured; fiddles; children's songs and catches, many of which were collected among Lowland Scots children; songs, many of which are variants on ballads collected by Child or on Burns's songs; and "mak'-ye' ups" - songs made up by Belle Stewart out of her own experiences.

Celtic Folk Tales from America (1959) Llanerch Enterprises, Llanerch, Porthcawl, Dyfed, Wales SA48 8PP) contains a selection of largely pre-Christian stories from American Brittany most of which were first published by the French collector of tales P. Luzel in *Contes populaires de Bretagne* (1879). This edition divides the tales according to representative themes and provides a new translation, introduction and commentary by Derek Bryce.

TL5 May 30 1986 POETRY

The recent generations at their song

Michael Hofmann

DILLON JOHNSTON
Irish Poetry After Joyce
23pp. Mountrath, Portlaoise: Dolmen Press, £20.
08458 4374

PAUL MULDOON (Editor)
The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry
23pp. Faber. £10.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0711 57601

PAUL MULDOON
The Winkles
23pp. Gallery Press, 19, Oakdown
Road, Dublin 14. £3.
0844011518

THOMAS KINSSELLA
Song of the Psyche
23pp. £12. 0 9302713 7 3

Vertical Smile
23pp. £10. 0 9484630 1 5

PERCY LANE, 47, Percy Lane, Dublin 4.
JEREMY MARON
Jalisco
23pp. Gallery Press. £6.60 (paperback, £3.60).
0844011836

DINA LONGLEY (Editor)
The Selected Paul Durcan
23pp. Belfast: Blackstaff. £4.95.
084403547

MULDOON
The Birth Wall Café
23pp. Belfast: Blackstaff. £4.95.
084403482

Both *Irish Poetry After Joyce* and *The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry* show, by descriptive criticism and hard evidence respectively, that Irish poetry in English does not begin and end with Yeats and Heaney, but that there are only the most visible in a whole nebula of talented poets. Dillon Johnston, the director of Wake Forest University Press and thus responsible for publishing much recent Irish

poetry in the United States, has organized his discussion around four pairs of poets - Austin Clarke and Thomas Kinsella, Patrick Kavanagh and Seamus Heaney, Denis Devlin and John Montague, and Louis MacNeice and Derek Mahon - but because his argument really demands it, but as an anti-Yeatsian device, to protect his subjects from that intimidating paradigm of the "Irish poet". In his final chapter, he also devotes a lesser amount of space to Michael Longley, Medbh McGuckian, Paul Muldoon and others. Paul Muldoon's anthology, which covers fifty years and three or four poetic generations, nevertheless includes only ten poets: Kavanagh, MacNeice, Kinsella, Montague, Heaney, Longley, Mahon, Paul Durcan, Tom Paulin and McGuckian. The discrepancies between the two lists are worth attending to. Johnston's index, which admittedly is faulty, mentions neither Durcan nor Paulin. But while Durcan is genuinely absent from the book, Paulin's name is mentioned once or twice, though his poetry is not discussed. I can only assume this is on grounds of nationality, which is strange, for elsewhere Johnston can be quite dismissive about "testing for Irishness", notably in the case of MacNeice and the slight he suffered from critics and anthologists for "seeming only sporadically Irish", whatever that means: it sounds like quite an Irish condition.

As for Muldoon's omissions of Austin Clarke and Denis Devlin, they should be seen in the context of his small overall selection: how many others are also absent from *The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry*? John Hewitt, Richard Murphy, James Simmonds... They reflect Muldoon's preferences as editor, and are his responsibility. There are other, more populous anthologies on the market. Muldoon has made his like an aggregate of "Selected Poems", with each poet, on average, enjoying the freedom of forty pages. Muldoon's exclusion of himself from his anthology, however - if understandable on grounds of editorial hygiene - is a great pity,

and severely weakens the latter, truly contemporary part of the book. As the youngest contributor, Muldoon would have finished it off in style. As it is, he has taken himself out almost entirely: no poems, no introduction, not even a "Note". Ah, but there is something, a mischievously ventriloquial selection, of the tiny poem "Widgeon", poetically dictated by him to Seamus Heaney, and politely dedicated back to him. And there is an "Epilogue", in the form of a radio discussion from the year 1939, between Louis MacNeice and F. R. Higgins, representing, roughly, the Westerner and the Slavophile respectively in the Irish literary argument. F. R. Higgins also crops up in Johnston's book; the crusty Patrick Kavanagh blames him for "the absurdity and the lie called 'the Irish Literary movement'", which, insult to injury, he goes on to call "a thorough-going English-bred lie". This is what Higgins has to say here:

Present-day Irish poets are believers - heretical believers, maybe - but they have the spiritual buoyancy of a belief in something. The sort of belief I see in Ireland is a belief emanating from life, from nature, from revealed religion, and from the nation. A sort of dream that produces a sense of magic.

By inference anyway, Muldoon must see this line - the Celtic Noon - as the most awful prescriptive rot, for he leaves the last word to MacNeice, who discusses poetry in terms of great latitude and amiability, and refuses to be drawn "into an Ireland versus England match". A poet, he says, "is a sensitive instrument designed to record anything which interests his mind or affects his emotions". And finally, Muldoon's anthology will not allow itself to be defined any more narrowly than that.

I suspect that, for many readers, its greatest gift will be a belated acquaintance with the generation between Yeats and Heaney, principally with Kavanagh and (for once, firmly in this context) MacNeice. John Montague, in the introduction to his *Faber Book of Irish Verse* (reviewed in the *TL5* of July 19, 1974), de-

scribed MacNeice as "very much a father figure for the poets of the province". Dillon Johnston quotes Derek Mahon's remark that MacNeice's example provided "a frame of reference for a number of younger poets in much the same way as Kavanagh's has in the South". Muldoon's anthology sets them both up in just this way, symmetrical and different. Reading through the full selections of their work, one is struck by the magnificent asperity of Kavanagh, the wit and poise of MacNeice. Both are full of lines and passages that seem to offer themselves as epigraphs for the book, as texts for its subsequent meditations, with their thoughts on the matter of Ireland - or the matter with Ireland - and the role of the poet - or the absence of such a role. The very first poem, Kavanagh's "Iniskeen Road: July Evening", establishes the poet as a poor solitary, an Alexander Selkirk all alone in possession of his landscape, with all his fellow-mortals gone off to a barn-dance: "A road, a mile of kingdom, I am king / Of banks and stones and every blooming thing". One might set beside this MacNeice's "Epitaph for Liberal Poets" or the "Elegy for Minor Poets".

Muldoon has included the whole of "The Great Hunger", Kavanagh's long poem about Irish rural life as experienced by the poor farmer Patrick Maguire, a kind of terminal anti-hero. It is a splendidly unsparring attack on the Zolaesque trinity of mother, soil and pub; on a life that, it seems, cannot bring anything but unfulfillment; on the *ersatz* gratifications of husbandry, pub philosophy, and, as here, card-playing:

Eleven o'clock and still the game
Goes on and the players seem to be
Drunk in an Orient opium den.
Midnight, one o'clock, two.
Somebody's leg has fallen asleep.
What about home?

The short lines are wonderfully accommodated to the direct speech and changing perspectives of naturalism: they show dullness to terrible advantage. Kavanagh also does a good line

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in a more literary kind of abuse, describing Maguire's mother, "She had a venomous drawl, / And a wizened face like moth-eaten leatherette", and his sister, "His sister tightens her legs and her hips and frizzles up / Like the wick of an oil-less lamp". This grimly enjoyable anti-pastoral is followed by more lenient, beautiful lines like "We played with the frilly edges of reality / While we puffed our cigarettes".

Even without "Bagpipe Music" (sadly not included), the MacNeice section can look punky and panoptical, written with an audible sneer, with its assonances and internal rhymes. Does there exist in the language another group of five words as derisive as "Park your car in Killarney"? The whole of "Valediction" is a *tour de force*, its open and importunate sentence-structure served by vicious observations, spilling on assonantly. It is in "Sunday Morning" ("Man's heart expands to tinker with his car") that one finds an anticipation of Derek Mahon's "Glengormley"; in "Autumn Journal", the suburban Paulin ("And each rich family boasts a sagging tennis-net / On a spongy lawn beside a dripping shrubbery"); while "Train to Dublin" contains that strangely potent construction that Paul Muldoon has made his own: "I can no more gather my mind up in my fist / Than the shadow of the smoke of this train upon the grass".

It may be partly a quirk of the selection, but, by dint of poems of hatred and frustration like "The Great Hunger" and poems of elegant doubt like "Eclogue Between the Motherless", one has to go halfway through the book before finding a love poem of any description; then, admittedly, there are those of Montague, Longley and Heaney. Hereabouts Muldoon's selection gravitates quite sharply towards the earlier work of the poets he includes: only Tom Paulin, with ten poems from his latest book *Liberty Tree*, is an exception. There is only one poem from Montague's last book; one recent poem of Longley's; nothing from Durcan's last three books. The selection couldn't really be called off-beat or up-to-the-minute. Montague seems to me to be almost better served by his own choice of four poems in his *Faber Book of Irish Verse* than by the twenty-four here. None of Heaney's place-name poems is included, and the wider, angrier side of Mahon ("Ecclesiastes") is absent (I miss also his wonderfully exuberant, word-spinning "Joycentenary Ode"). Tom Paulin's schoolroom fantasy about the portmanteau poet-politician Rupert Brookeborough, "A Written Answer", is included. There is the same poet's "breezy Union Jack" (from "Manichean Geography"), but not the "hunched detective"; the "muddled villages" or the "boreal teacher" from "Atlantic Changelings"; "Traces" and "As a White Lodge in a Garden of Cucumbers".

Given such large choices, though, and the far larger pool from which they were made, such specialized discounts as these are inevitable. Certainly, the number of first-rate poems in *The Faber Book of Contemporary Irish Poetry* is far higher than the "half-a-dozen in fifty" that the generous MacNeice and the parsimonious Higgins were able to identify in English anthologies of 1939 and 1938 and 1937. But there is more to attend to than that: there is the way horizons have broadened over the years, even geographically: from the wretched early references to "Balling Broadway, London Town" or "Handclasp at Euston" or "that last Christmas in Brooklyn", to Seamus Heaney's "Night Drive" South to France and Italy, to Derek Mahon's archaeological sifting through a whole world of history and decay ("We might be anywhere - In the Dordogne; / Iquitos, Bethlehem") and to Tom Paulin's investigation of political parallels binding the world just as surely and invisibly as lines of latitude.

Most of the poets here have managed to marry the strengths of the two traditions that Muldoon has set at the head of his anthology: taking the difficult affections of Kavanagh and the verbal awareness of MacNeice to bind words and feelings in new ways. As has, of course, Muldoon himself; he is the most characteristic poet now writing in Britain and Ireland. His trail-seeming pamphlet, *The Wishbone*, contains a dozen tense, resolute and fascinating poems written since the publication of *Quoy* (1983). The governing notion behind the volume seems to be that of the trophy, the proof of the riddling, the readiness to be

They reversed away from the window. To the right hung one ox-tail, to the left one ox-tongue.

His favoured sonnet-form, first explored in *Mules*, is now presented in jointed pieces, garnished with asterisks. The title-poem is about eating a Christmas dinner with his father. There is no point in quoting it in anything less than its entirety:

Maureen in England, Joseph in Guelph, my mother in her grave.

At three o'clock in the afternoon we watch the Queen's message to the Commonwealth with the sound turned off.

He seems to favour *Camelot* over *To Have And Have Not*.

Yet we agree, my father and myself, that here is more than enough for two; a frozen chicken, spuds, sprouts, Pazo sage and onion.

The wishbone like a rowelled spur on the fibula of Sir - or Sir -

One notes immediately how engaging and open this is, both informative and economical. It is perhaps the syntax, more than anything, that marks out a Muldoon poem: the very deliberate, wilful alternating between curt observations without verbs, and almost sumptuously correct and full sentences, savouring mood and tense, sorry almost that they are not to be translated into Greek or Latin. Accompanying this variation is Muldoon's mesmeric use of idiom: that "no more . . . than" or "no less . . . than" that occurs in MacNeice, the "might just as well" - all the expressions of wishing and offering that recur in his poetry, contributing both specificity and uncertainty. Taking into account also the sometimes-less-than-half-rhymes, his poems are weightless as things in space; the short, rather sardonic narrative of "The Wishbone" is far less important than the play of suggestion and implication, where there is no set order, and anything can be contemporary with anything else. Thus, the title *To Have And Have Not* really spreads over the whole poem; England, Guelph, the Commonwealth, Camelot all coalesce in one quarrelsome and disaffected whole, and the simile for the wishbone at the end suggests some Dantesque atrocity. For all its breezy innocence, "The Wishbone" can be set alongside the exhumations of Seamus Heaney's *North* or the archaeological researches of Derek Mahon. And the whole pamphlet, well, that should be nailed or glued or spiced to Muldoon's anthology, an impromptu supplement, while one waits for his next book, and his *Selected Poems*, both promised within the next year.

Some of the poets who are represented in Muldoon's Faber anthology have recently published new volumes. I found Thomas Kinsella's work rather watery in Muldoon's selection of it, both literally and figuratively: "Downstream", "Touching the River", "Tao and Unfitness at Initiation on the River Nore".

Human and natural epiphanies are lovingly evoked, but the connections between them are often not made available in the irregular stream of his poetry. And yet, he is also capable of the utmost hardness and conclusion, as in these lines from his elegy on the composer Seán O Riada, in *Fifteen Dead* (1979):

Pierrot limping forward in the sun out of Merrion Square, long ago, in black overcoat and beret, pale as death from his soiled bed,

swallowed back; autumn brewed in clay, uttered in brief meat and bones, flattened back under our flower.

His two latest books from his own Peppercorn Press have the same variable beauty as the *Cantos* of Ezra Pound. The shorter poem in *Songs of the Psyche*, memories of fifty years ago and more, are admirable in their certainty and definition.

Ruskin and Engels and Carlyle: Shakespeare to day prize, 1927 in dead pencil;

the insurance collection book in a fat plastic hand, a nervous, un-nervous.

with four young men dressed up together and leaning together in laughter.

Her Vertical Smile, a poem about Mahler, sex and the First World War, contains some magnificent writing, especially about music:

A step forward and a lesser step back, the baton withdrawn. A timed exhalation.

Dolce . . . He reaches for something soothing. His shoulders sag for a bar of silence.

Kinsella strikes me as deliberately unorganized, a poet of indeterminate drift and sublime passages.

Derek Mahon's *Antarctica*, his latest "interim collection" (how he must enjoy the uncertainty of that expression), contains fourteen poems: it is a sombre, impressive and moving book, concerned with the subject of farewells. The first poem, "A Kensington Notebook", even though it predates Mahon's recent departure for Dublin, still lends itself to being read as his goodbye to London; it is a slightly over-stuffed, allusive poem about previous residents of that *quartier*, Ford, Pound and Lewis, that broadens out into a reflection on the role of the artist. The title-poem is a villanelle, whose two recurring lines are "At the heart of the ridiculous, the sublime" (not a bad motto for Mahon's art) and the famous last words of Captain Oates, "I am just going outside and may be some time". Neither poem-description quite manages to suggest the raptness and bleakness of *Antarctica* as a whole, qualities that make it - even for Mahon - quite a departure; their wit and erudition, their shapeliness and tripping music almost seem to be at odds with what is being expressed in the rest of the book, which is a grave, valedictory vision of the world.

It is suggested in an interview Mahon gave in a recent *Poetry Ireland Review* (reassuringly jaunty, by the way), that it is Beckett who has moved to the centre of his *Weltschmerz*; and it is Beckett who supplies one of the epigraphs for what is possibly the best poem in the book, "Tithonus", the other being "and after the fire a still small voice" from the Book of Kings. The few casual rhymes in this poem, the little plays on "lights" and "croak", the production of culture and nature where both have become obsolete, are the traces of an art that has outlived itself, of an intelligence

"nodding in the everbreeze" - to borrow from another poem - after some catastrophe. The winter at the end of "Tithonus", the wind at the beginning, the fire and the deserts of the epigraphs, indeed, all the weather and elements in the book, are of nuclear origin. These are tender, almost unbearably significant poems.

Paul Durcan has found many advocates (not the least of them Paul Muldoon) for his bare, rambling friendly, open, tactics, glib, less, irreverent, *Epater les Irlandais* poems. But even Edna Longley, editor and introducer of his now slightly expanded, reissued *Selected Poems*, while admiring his moral fibre (he has developed the conscience of his race, she says), notes that his poems are sometimes short of literary quality. They sag and bag and botch, to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to go on reading them. The parody news-items, the anti-ecclesiastical outrages, the naive love poems, all get plenty of airing. But *The Belfast Review* is right when it observes that "he resuscitates one's flagging belief in 'the poet-as-the-world'"; where Patrick Kavanagh found himself out on the road, all alone, Paul Durcan would surely have been at the dance with everyone else. In his poems he is often to be found in pubs and cafés and trains, talking to people. He comes across as a good, brave and independent man, capable of saying what it takes some courage to say, big things and little.

His whole-hearted championing of women ("Pat Molloy", "Teresa's Bar") find its counterpart in some rather deprecating self-images, and allied to these is a series of distinctly unflattering male portraits, latter-day Blooms like "The Kilfenora Teaboy" and "The County Engineer".

But in bed at night with his wife She whispers to him 'Oh my little engineer.'

The habit of self-ridicule, and his consistently pro-feminine outlook, make for considerable poignancy in the poems in his latest book, *The Berlin Wall Café*, about the end of his marriage. He is left as the fervent priest, even the prophet, of a religion that has brought him great suffering:

Calmly I pledged my prayer and affection, Promising her never again to seek her out, Never again in this city to darken her doorway, To woo her only and always in the eternity of my love.

Let us now praise famous women - and their children.

Overwhelming questions

Simon Rae

ELIZABETH JENNINGS
Extending the Territory
91pp. Carcanet. £4.95.
085635 558 5

It may be doubted whether Elizabeth Jennings ever felt entirely at home in the ranks of the Movement. "Answers", the last poem in her first full collection, *A Way of Looking* (1955), shows her outwardly conforming to, while at the same time chafing against, the constraints of the Movement ideology: "I kept my answers small and kept them near; / Big questions bruised my mind but still I let / Small answers be a bulwark to my fear." With its simple colloquial diction ordered into a tight formal structure, the poem is a pleasing example of Movement poetics. But there is an obvious dissatisfaction with the proscription of the "metaphysical"; the poem voices a hankering for the "overthrow" of the small answers, and in its last line envisages "all the great conclusions coming near".

From the 1960s, Miss Jennings went her own way, with confessional poems about mental breakdown, and a strong line in candid religious verse in which the vulnerability of belief is exposed and explored. Both formally and thematically she has moved outwards from her 1950s base, and as the title of her latest collection indicates she continues to do so. Far from being satisfied, or half-satisfied, with small answers, her poetry now plays host to some very big questions: "Why / Are we set here, frightened of our reflections, / Living in fear yet desperate not to die?" "Is this globe a

Floating lyrically

Adam Mars-Jones

MARK STRAND
Mr and Mrs Baby and Other Stories
127pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.95.
0701 3022 9

Mark Strand is a poet as well as a writer of stories, and in his fiction he continues to observe a poet's priorities. The substitution of the poetic for the prosaic is actually the mechanism of one of the most genial pieces here, "The President's Resignation": the President in question treats the life of his country not as a narrative, the telling of which is briefly entrusted to him, but as a pretext for lyric. "The blue sky", he says in his farewell address, "in variations and repetitions, is what I look back on: the blues of my first day in office, the blues of my fifth day, the porcelain blues, the monotonous blues, the stately blues, the ideal blues and the slightly less than ideal blues, the yellow blues on certain winter days."

A successful device in one story looks a little different when it seems to haunt all the others. Strand's problem is one of short-windedness; the brevity of his stories is not an effect of compression. He seems to find something almost embarrassing about the merely incremental progress of narrative, and recurs as soon as he can to the transcendent evasiveness of lyric. As the resigning President puts it: "Who can forget my proposals . . . ? How like poetry, said my enemies. They were right. For it was my wish to make nothing happen."

But what amounts to a proud boast for poetry can be an admission of failure in a writer of fiction. Strand can start a story with real brio: "Even before the baby was born, its mother hired a sister to prepare for the days when she'd need one. She told the sister, 'The baby's in the living room, but it's real small. If you don't see it, don't worry.' Then the mother pretended to leave, and hid in the bushes outside the living-room window, watching the sister's every move." Having devised this promising situation, Strand retreats from it, producing instead the sort of surrealism which palls because it sets up no vibrations in the ordinary.

In "Dog Life", a husband tells his wife about his past as a dog. The daffy epiphanies and surrealism he describes are the story's reason for existing; and in a prose-poem they would be

enough: "I was embarrassed by the pomp of bitches in heat - their preening and wagging, by the panting lust of my brothers." By the time the husband has finished his story, his wife is asleep; her function as a trigger of lyric is over, and she has none of the troubling solidity, the surplus reality, of a character in a real story.

It seems no accident that Strand describes encounters rather than relationships. Again, one story puts this trait to work by recounting the hero's six momentary "true loves", his five marriages being mentioned only in passing. Strand's is a sensibility that everywhere privileges the glimpse over the gaze.

The closest approach in the book to the creation of a real space for the reader is in stories where the lyric voice is at least put at a distance. In "Wooley", for instance, the narrator reviews the history he has shared with a friend, charismatic, inspirational and now dead:

When I asked him how he felt after his father cut him off without a penny, he said, 'I would go out under the stars and enter the smallness of being that was mine, and I would disappear into the emptiness within, and it seemed enormous.' Again there was no anger.

Once, while we were swimming, I asked him if things came easily to him. He said, 'I see the world through a small eye, an eye so small the world does not notice.' I was so moved by this answer I almost drowned.

This last sentence briefly suggests a comic chasm between the world as it is and the way that lyric represents it, between words that float and people who are liable to drown. But there are no values other than lyrical ones on offer, and the chasm can only close up again.

The title character in the story "The Killer Poet" kills his parents and his dog, then goes to the garden to contemplate the poem he will write to commemorate his mother's beauty. "An air of fertility formed an invisible crown of fullness everywhere, which is why, I suppose, I conceived a poem not about what I intended but about tomatoes, fennel, squash, and the buried inverted obelisks of carrots and parsley." That's the thing about lyricism: it is discontinuous, only fleetingly connected to a world of necessary consequence, and it can transform absolutely anything. Lyrical brilliance is not necessarily a virtue in a writer of prose, and as a producer of fiction Mark Strand is clearly, to use a poetic word with a humdrum meaning, moonlighting. He backs down from narrative, and takes the earliest opportunity to disrupt it with rapture.

The poor as no one would want them to be

John Gledson

CLARICE LISPECTOR
The Hour of the Star
90pp. 085635 626 3
The Foreign Legion: Stories and chronicles
219pp. 085635 627 1.
Translated with an afterword by Giovanni Pontiero.
Manchester: Carcanet. £8.95 each.

In the past year or so, four translations of works by the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector have appeared in this country: *Family Ties* and *The Apple in the Dark* were reviewed in these pages on January 25 last year. But it is hard to imagine anyone who enjoyed the stories in the first of these, in particular, not getting extra pleasure from this daring, intense and yet final. Not a quick writer, "We" can be grateful to Giovanni Pontiero for his belief in her, and for the quality of his translations.

The Hour of the Star is her last book, published posthumously in 1977, the year she died (aged 56) of cancer in Rio. In the circumstances it would have been hard to call it anything but a masterpiece, "disseminated" writer as she was in Brazil. Yet, out of real necessity, because the thought of writing as a useless occupation unless it brought home something of the possible meanings and meaningfulness of the ordinary lives, she had to reject any form of consecration; here, in a novel of less than 100 pages, she again succeeds in upsetting women from the poor North-Eastern region of Brazil. It is the far as Lispector can make it to the ordinary. Even her skin-colour is uncer-

tain. She is poor, earning less than the statutory minimum salary, but she is a typist, who listens to "Radio Cultura", picking up useless pieces of information entirely devoid of context - "a man, who was also a mathematician, wrote *Alice in Wonderland*" - which she then "discusses" with her repellently macho and self-confident boyfriend, Olímpico, in conversations which go beyond banality to reveal unplumbed depths of intellectual and emotional deprivation. Not for nothing is "the most popular soft drink in the world" her favourite: yet even here, when we seem to be falling into stereotype, Lispector paradoxically admits that its attraction is real. As well as "sponsoring the recent earthquake in Guatemala", "this drink which contains coca is today: It allows people to be modern and to move with the times." This might seem to be said tongue in cheek; in fact, it is entirely likely that it is not. It is a measure of the book's success that it manages to make someone unlovable nevertheless such an uncomfortable presence. Even her death under the wheels of a Mercedes just after clairvoyance, has forecast love and success for her, sits firmly astride mockery and tragedy, a challenge to reader and narrator alike.

Poverty is a difficult subject for anyone, but it is only too comprehensible if for a Latin American it is even more so. Who could deny its crushing importance and visibility in the continent? Nevertheless, it is easy to feel that, like the Guatemalan earthquake, it has been "sponsored" for consumption at home and abroad. Desensitizing is part of Clarice's solution: Macabéa, I suspect, is the poor as no one would want them to be, whatever their political views. This is the measure, not only of

Raging poetically

John Butt

REINALDO ARENAS
Farewell to the Sea
Translated by Andrew Hurley
413pp. Viking. £12.95.
0670 52960 5

Farewell to the Sea was much persecuted by the Cuban Communist authorities: the first manuscript "disappeared" in 1969, the second was confiscated in 1971, the third was smuggled out of Havana in 1974 and published in Barcelona in 1982. The publishers highlight these deplorable facts, which are a burden on the reviewer's conscience, because for all its painful history, the novel is just about unreadable. In fact, one marvels at the paranoia of a régime which could imagine itself threatened by a book which so crudely disqualifies its own message of protest by making it look like the side-product of private emotional, marital and sexual hang-ups.

Post-Marxist depression is a malady so widespread and predictable, and of such rapid onset, that revolutionary régimes would do well to take prophylactic measures against it - for example, by moderating their promises. Marxists no doubt ask for the sort of trouble exemplified by this novel when they claim, or at least refuse explicitly to deny, that the revolution will not only bring political and economic remedies but personal happiness as well. The protagonists suffer from problems that Marxism-Leninism can hardly address: their marriage is in crisis because the wife looks on her baby as a tyrant and her husband has discovered he is a homosexual. And it is against the background of this personal distress that the book rages against Castro's Cuba in the form of two separate, largely divergent, shrill and halucinatorily streams of consciousness, mostly written in poetic prose and a third in more or less surrealistic verse, sometimes printed vertically or diagonally.

That these characters want far more than they could reasonably expect from half a decade of state planning and collectivized sugar production is revealed in such thoughts of the wife as "Now that the - shall we say - fundamental problems are solved - house, food, car, salary - we can devote our full efforts to making life intolerable. We could wipe each other out once and for all with an honest look." Her problem is at least identifiable, and one of

the novel's achievements is the remarkably detailed and convincing portrait it gives of a depressed young mother in a dead-end marriage. Moreover, she spots the nature of their politics when she admits that "we denounce the implacable censorship so as not to speak of our own silences".

The husband's problems are two-fold: he is a married homosexual and he lives in a Victorian society. But this dilemma is used to fuel a hatred of communism which knows no reasonable bounds: it is a perverted religion which "offers man nothing but Hell", but it appeals to the innumerable "small-time hoodlums and the frustrated of the world", so he is surprised (such is his opinion of men) that it hasn't spread further in "this era of great changes, poisons and self-flagellations", polluted by the schemes of "bearded leftist whoremongers encoined in Paris inventing or backing nonexistent revolutions (which are no more than unanimous prisons for forced laborers)", etc.

That Cuba is in the hands of bearded leftist whoremongers is about as much as the novel tells us about the decade following the fall of Batista. Its artistic strength must no doubt be sought in its poetic charge. One of its themes is that natural beauty is a permanent defence against the ridiculous pretensions of the human intellect, but it is difficult to judge how well Arenas captures such beauty in his own lyrical passages. For a start, the book is obviously all but untranslatable, and Andrew Hurley can't be blamed for whole pages of such stuff as "the finest fuckup of them all / the great floating lipphouse where / a photograph forever flutters / its philanthropic fluff and / an unphotogenic, / fetid, / syphilitic, / aphonic mephitic / proffers us / . . . his fur / ous phys / log / n / omy" (Fidel Castro, we presume).

There are passages of beauty, for example where the narrators contemplate the sea at dusk (a symbol of a purity untouched by left-wing politics), but these moments of tranquil contemplation are soon dinned out by feeble abuse aimed at everything in modern Cuba, not just the political prisons, thought control and execution of teenagers, but everything the régime ever did, thought or organized, including calls for improved coffee production and more careful grain harvesting; even, in fact, the shape of Castro's face. Had this book been written against Videla, Mao, Stalin or Hitler, it would still invite the suspicion that its author was deliberately looking for martyrdom in the name of art.

an honourable (and anything but "magical" realism, but of the need for what at first reading is the most startling feature of the book; its very assertive and even unattractive male narrator, Rodrigo S. M. His maleness, as often with Clarice, is an index of coldness and calculation; here, it is something she needs to provide a barrier between her and her subject, yet is none the less more than that, for his intelligence and his battles with what he cannot help but narrate are part of the story's fascination.

The stories of *The Foreign Legion*, first published in 1964, are closer to the concerns of *Family Ties*, generally centred on the Rio middle class, and on emotional crises, especially

those of adolescence. These are not books for children, however: rather, they remind us of the continuing presence within ourselves of the vulnerable, the awkward, the insensitive and callous beings that children often are - more openly than adults. At her best, which in her stories is frequent, Clarice combines intensity with precision. The thirteen stories are supplemented by more than a hundred "chronicles" - jottings, which vary in length from a few lines to a few pages, encouraged by the Brazilian press, which allows writers like Lispector or the poet Drummond de Andrade space to doodle in public. Naturally, it is impossible to read many of them at a sitting, but every reader will find something.

John A. Hall

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07108 10229

Both these novels feature an unfortunate traveller – a Calvinist and a monkey, respectively – cast among and destroyed by an alien society satirically reflecting our own.

With entertaining bibliophilic plausibility, Bamber Gascoigne unfolds his specious translation from the Portuguese of a nineteenth-century librarian at São João del Rei. The Portuguese is itself a translation from the sixteenth-century French of apostate monk Jacques le Balleur's account (discovered, written on tobacco leaves, in the library's broom cupboard) of his detention by a tribe of Brazilian highlanders.

These concupiscent Tupinilhs have mistaken le Balleur's ten pages of the third book of Rabelais (4 vols, Troyes edition, 1556), sole remnants of the work to survive the vagaries of jungle travel, for the Bible promised them by Jacques's missionary predecessor. Thus the Word is made Cod, without which was not anything made that was made, and they abide by it.

Jacques, acceding as king of the tribe, must coit with twenty wives – a monthly tally of his prowess is presented to the people in the form

of an appropriate number of fruits. Each new moon he must superscribe both sides of a single tobacco leaf before renewing his responsibilities. These leaves, "Monthly Reports", describe his experiences, from masked initiation as priapic monarch, when "most startling of all, a hand gently cupped me from below, as delicately as if judging the weight of a pair of new-laid eggs", to the eve of his execution for chastity, repentant at last (having heretofore disregarded as "de necessitate the sin of fornication, unavoidable for a man with nineteen wives above the Christian allowance").

The savages' simple customs and their adoption of the Rabelaisian Gospel enable Gascoigne to comment on imbecile tenets held by ostensibly more urbane beings. Magnificent sideswipes abound:

These texts [the tobacco leaves] are their most sacred treasures. By this you make plain to us, Lord, that these seeming savages are of a reformed disposition. They bring to holy writ, as we of Geneva do, the care and veneration which the corrupt minions of Rome lavish upon a lump of the clay left over after You had fashioned Adam, or a long red hair recalling the earthly charms of the Magdalen, or even, dread Lord, and I remember this with revulsion from my misguided youth, parings from Your own sacred fingernails and portions of Your blessed forestain, all other recoverable elements having ascended with You as the Scriptures prove.

In this barbaric place a parallel is drawn between seedy Communism and more recognizably nasty anthropophagy – "flesh and blood at these savage festivities in the mouths of cannibals, and flesh and blood at the Mass". A-*propos de la guerre*, Jacques philosophizes: "In Christendom powerful lords march on their enemies, and brave men die, to decide the great principles by which we may live in peace and virtue, as for example whether there are two or seven sacraments and whether the wine shall be given along with the bread." But with the savages "this constant struggle is not, as

with us at home, about important matters".

The same Swiftian tone dismisses the foolish natives' disgusting creation myth (God ejaculating into a clay pot), and substitutes the bona fide version – the fashioning of Adam from clay and Eve from his rib ("godly in its grandeur and simplicity").

There is bawdry in this well-balanced book ("These details are Rabelaisian, but so is life"); there is tenderness – Jacques, writing of his dead, beloved, favourite wife "can never describe her. But by this devious route, bringing to mind your own happiness, past or present, perhaps may lead you into imagining the joyful presence and the grievous loss of one whose very name it seems a sacred and desperate act to write, large letter by letter"; there is unpretentious shrewdness in its apophthegms ("It may be observed that all men, sensing the approach of death, become reluctant to offend against any religious tenet or superstition", "Theology in this modern age is a violent matter"). *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*.

Lucretian, Rabelaisian and Swiftian overtones are less felicitous in *Gallimauf's Gospel*. The joke about a monkey being washed ashore during the Napoleonic War, identified as a French spy and hung by the people of Hartlepool, is elaborated by Chris Wilson to parallel-length. The philosophical, theological, ethical and commercial values of a society are questioned as Maria, simian survivor of a shipwreck, reaches the isle of life and confronts the community.

The protagonists are caricatures – Hogg, the bloated, avaricious businessman; Parson Lovegrave, lascivious, hypocritical, evil; Lord Iffe, powerful, despotic; Gallimauf, the island's philosopher, a fool. This last recognizes Maria, by her curious language, as a Gallic Thinker, and an amusing exchange ensues:

"Huchahuchahucha... huch", declared Maria, pushing her rasping tongue into the scholar's ear whilst holding him locked in a fierce embrace.

"Huch, huch", conceded Gallimauf, squinting. "Mais il faut cultiver votre jardin."

There is a mad woman, Vera, in the mould of *Heart of Midlothian's* Madge Wildfire, persecuted to insanity by the populace (it emerges that they have killed her illegitimate child – "I nursed and loved it, Lordy... Then they took it away and kilt it"). Vera befriends the misfit monkey, and, predictably, hers is the voice of sanity and humanity in a violently deranged tribe. At the bestial "Ophal Meas", a ritual of piss and buggery, Vera chides the "Wicked peoples – naughty bodies" and protects the innocent beast from learning any more.

A hint of Flann O'Brien is claimed by the blurb and is perhaps detectable. People of foreign tongue are said to "twist the proper sounds of words so that they become like best spoons that cannot carry. The meanings slide off the edges, fall to the floor, and all is a deluge of nonsense". In a Carrollian trial "Both twins swore they were innocent, protesting they were the other. 'I am victimised by mistake appearance,' they spoke in unison, 'the naughty one is my brother...'. The manic energy and menace that O'Brien generates is lacking, though.

Nor, despite cod's livers stewed in goat stock and goat chops fried in cod's oil and members "wrinkled and limp as cod-liver sausage, or swollen and mad as rhubarb", does Wilson's short novel seriously recall Rabelais or Swift. But there is an original, memorably poignant last wail from poor, mad Vera on man's inhumanity to monkey, as she laments the executed flemed outsider:

Persons hate peoples. Smearem weakies, ceter nates, suckem marrow, scrunchem bones... Self-fem life so snuffit... seet run, braykitt leggie. Heart laught and squishit. Watchit fly so cage it. Born it, so pickle it. Breathe it so chookit neck. Seet see so pokit eyes out.

Publishing the faith

Peter Hebblethwaite

WILFRID SHEED

Frank and Maisie: A memoir with parents
266pp. Chatto and Windus. £14.95.
0711 30547

Only connoisseurs of Catholic trivia will know that the Catholic Evidence Guild, founded in 1919 by an inebriate New Zealander, was designed to convert England by soap-box oratory. If it did not achieve that goal, at least it brought together one of the most improbable and successful couples of the twentieth century. Frank Sheed, fresh from Sydney, had a lawyer's love of argument, and became a speaker for the Guild. At one of its periodic humble sales, he was addressed by an officious lady who asked: "Are these good scissors?" She would have had every right to call him "young man" since he was eight years her junior. "Madam", said Frank, looking at the merchandise for the very first time, "these are the very best scissors." That was how Frank Sheed met Maisie Ward, granddaughter of "ideal" Ward, who preceded Newman into the Roman Catholic Church and who, notoriously, would have welcomed an infallible doctrine with *The Times* each morning. Her father, Wilfrid, edited the *Dublin Review*, fell under suspicion of "Modernism", as did almost everyone literate, and died a broken man. Wilfrid Sheed (his grandson) cruelly remarks in *Frank and Maisie: A memoir with parents* that "the *Dublin Review* seems to have been at the exact center of the teacup in which the storm raged".

What Frank and Maisie had in common was an intense conviction that the Catholic Church was right on just about everything. They had hardly any "non-Catholic" friends, and this did not change much for the next fifty years. Yet the publishing house they founded, Sheed and

Ward, was not narrow in the 1930s, since it introduced English-speaking Catholics to Jacques Maritain, Karl Adam, Léon Bloy, Romano Guardini, Paul Claudel and many others. But home-grown, homespun G.K. Chesterton was the author's godfather, and Maisie toiled for eight years over her biography of the great man. His limitations were not unknown in the Sheed family. His godson remarks that G.K.'s reading invariably stopped when he had found his first good debating point. Even Maisie herself confessed in her Edwardian accent: "I'm afraid G.K. was drinking rather heavily towards the end." As for Hilaire Belloc, her son says that "though she admired his work, she was immune to his manner, and for years lived in dread of being asked to write his biography". She remained unasked. Wilfrid Sheed speculates that his mother's post-war book, *France Pagan?* was her revenge on Belloc's growlings about "Europe and the faith".

Of course none of this was admitted at Hyde Park Corner where Frank and Maisie mostly did their weekly tub-thumping. They were apologists to their fingertips. You want to talk about bad popes? I can name six who were far worse than the Borgias: but so what? You think the Church and science are opposed? Open your dictionary – there you will find ampe, volts and pasteurization, all named after good Catholic scientists. At Guild training sessions Frank impersonated a rich variety of hecklers without whom no meeting could succeed.

Since Americans, on the whole, did not have a tradition of street-corner speaking, the United States translation of their skills was the lecture tour. This kept Sheed and Ward afloat financially and brought new readers in a country still dominated by "Slater says" and "Father says". That lay people had something to contribute intellectually was a novelty. Frank, who had picked up some theology from reading his

authors, wrote a best-selling book called *Theology and Sanity* which showed that Catholicism was common sense. It was used as the Sixth Form textbook at Downside when young Wilfrid was sent there, an unhappy exile from New York and baseball, in the late 1940s.

Frank Sheed began to feel more at home in America. Evelyn Waugh, choosing his words with down-pulling care, described him as "an energetic American publisher". After a long talk with Sir Arnold Lunn, mountaineer and fervent apologist, Frank confessed, "You see, perhaps I'm provincial after all." Lunn nodded and said, "Perhaps that's it." Maisie thought this a wildly funny story. But the image of the bouncy young fellow from the Australian outback clung to him so that Maisie "became ever more respected in the land she had spurned while Frank's myth had to settle for that colony-gone-wrong, America". He became, as his son says, "Mr Chips to the whole Catholic nation". But he would not send his son to any of the Catholic colleges he exploited and packed him off instead to Oxford.

Something happened to Frank in the autumn of 1956. He fainted and fell off the soap-box at Hyde Park Corner, smashing the crucifix on which he leaned. One legend said he was talking of the devil at the time. His son maintains that he was a changed man after this, becoming much angrier with the Catholic biblical scholars who were, he believed, tearing the heart out of the New Testament. Wilfrid Sheed calls these the "King Lear years". He had published these men, brought them on, and now they were destroying his life's work. "I've had a good week," he would say, "I haven't heard a single major doctrine denied from the pulpit."

Yet the last years were not just grumpy. The Second Vatican Council (1962-5) was a triumph for Sheed and Ward policies. Many of the authors he had been championing became its leading theologians. But at the same time the Council was a body-blow to the kind of triumphalism that the Catholic Evidence Guild

had once represented. "If you argue to win", Frank mused towards the end, "you're bound to end up cheating." He put his son-in-law, Neil Middleton, in charge of the London end of the firm, and saw it drift incomprehensibly leftwards. The marriages of both his children broke up, which pained him immeasurably. The Catholic literary establishment seemed to be heading "for the barren land of alimony and child support". Maisie took it rather better, "voting dejectedly for the happiness of her children", as the author puts it. "I still have enthusiasm", she said towards the end. But then her head plopped back: "But what use is enthusiasm without energy?" Maisie died in 1975 at eighty-six.

Frank was still bouncing along the road. He had friends everywhere, so he never needed to stay in hotels. He took up Greek in his late seventies, having discovered that Cato began learning it in his nineties. So for the first time in his life he took to "exploring and celebrating the Bible rather than defending it". This brought him closer to the charismatic movement. His last book, *The Instructed Heart*, was the fruit of his latest studies on the meaning of "heart" in the New Testament. It was also a love-letter to his bride of fifty years. Then, concludes Wilfrid Sheed, "after waiting around patiently, fruitfully, he goes with absolute certainty to join her".

Any "assessment" of Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward will have to take into account their literary and apologetic work. It is probably more important in the long run that she founded the Catholic Housing Aid Society in Britain (if you are going to have more babies, you must have somewhere to put them), and that they were allies of the saintly Dorothy Day and Friendship House in New York. Though they were in the word-business, they knew that for Christians deeds are more important than words. Part of their achievement is to have evoked this loving memoir from their talented but sceptical son.

Belated awakenings

Violet MacKay

CATHARINE ARNOLD

Lost Time
220pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.
0340 387831

Catharine Arnold's novel about the belated sexual awakening of Cambridge don Miles Tattersall is loaded, overloaded, with the impediments of several sorts of sentimental and sensational novel-poltergeisty crashings of china cabinets and the plangent tones of the cello which Miles's sister Francesca plays professionally; long meaningful conversations about Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* in autumnal Cambridge pubs; dire warnings from psychic elderly composers; the suicide of a French novice and hints about something that happened long ago in an orchard, if not actually in a woodshed. This ought to guarantee a book which was not only bad but absurd, yet

somehow it does not; somehow this is a rather respectable first novel.

Part of the reason is that Arnold works so hard at it all; there is conviction to the way that practically every one of the major characters has some sort of memory attached to them of the awful demise of someone close. The sense of malign destiny zeroing in is achieved by the tawdriness of means – both pairs of siblings, Miles and Francesca and the younger pair Benjamin and Olivia, with whom Miles becomes entangled, have fathers who died slightly mysteriously as the result of falls – but it is thoroughly established and a vivid part of the novel's atmosphere. Arnold has a tendency to characterize people by presenting us with a list of their possessions in general and their books and records in particular; the chatter of various sorts and conditions is rather mechanically, but accurately, recorded, and there is real if mild comedy in the way Miles finds the shop talk of Benjamin's advertising designer cousin Melisa

utterly incomprehensible, "as obscure as structuralism".

There are rather too many references to parallel plots in books and films and rather too much arch prattle about books and paintings and music, but at least this is an author and a set of characters who have an intellectual life of overwhelming importance to them, however over-obtrusive it often becomes. One of the reasons why the erotic aspect of the novel works is the author's decision to make her virgin male and make his original seduction homosexual: she has to work hard to imagine and communicate what the acts feel like, and has also perhaps to restrict herself to the odd telling phrase, rather than going into endless photo-realistic detail. Reticence is not the only way to achieve erotic effects but it is a worthy one way, and one which, given Arnold's tendency to the catalogue, she was sensible to adopt in this sometimes clumsy but ultimately attractive novel.

It never is

LEN DEIGHTON

London Match
405pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.
0 09 61899 8

Len Deighton's latest book completes the trilogy begun with *Berlin Game* and continued with *Mexico 36*. Bernard Saiton solves the problems which have been nagging at him for a book and a half of the collection of the Soviet agent Erich Stimmus, and has a final showdown with his wife Fiona, who went over to the East in his first book, and is now a KGB colonel with an office in Berlin. But, of course, no showdown is absolutely final, as Bernard points out to his faithful sidekick, Werner Volkmann, on the last page: "It's not going, set and match to Fiona. It's not game, set and match to anyone. It never is." Which shows up the neat progression of titles for the gimmick it is. There's no change, no development over the three books. Dicky Cruyer, Saiton's superior, is the same person on his last appearance as he was on his first. Deighton hasn't written a bigger book, merely a longer one.

earlier he would probably have crammed the whole thing into two hundred odd pages, instead of one thousand and ninety.

This said, the final volume is probably the best of the three. The complex pattern of plot and counter-plot is traced deftly and excitingly. There are more scenes set in Berlin, which Deighton has always described brilliantly, and this makes up for an occasional unsureness in dealing with contemporary England, and an uncharacteristic sentimentality. Earlier, with a stroke of genius, he set Bernard and Fiona against one another, not only as intelligence agents, but also as separated husband and wife, adding a domestic dimension to the espionage game. Now, in a moment of weakness, he forces a beautiful nineteen-year-old blonde who works for the department to fall in love with his fat middle-aged hero. The only redeeming thought is that the too is being groomed for defection – she's half-Hungarian – and that Saiton will end up as the only man to have been cuckolded twice by an ideology.

T. J. Bonyon

Saved by ambition

Hanif Kureishi

VED MEHTA

Sound-Shadow of the New World
334pp. Collins. £15.
00217692

At four years of age Ved Mehta was totally blinded by meningitis. He may not know how things look but he knows intensely how they feel and he knows how to remember. Perhaps he remembers too much and too well. *Sound-Shadow of the New World* is the fifth volume of his autobiography (taking us up to the end of his teens), and at least two of his other books, *Walking the Indian Streets* and *A Portrait of India* are autobiographical.

The volume covers the three years he spent at the Arkansas School for the Blind between 1949 and 1951. In essence it is a story of ambition and overcoming. A blind boy from a poor country, India, goes to the United States, finds it strange but studies hard, meets girls, makes close friends with boys, and wins the school's scholarship medal. Ambition, which saves him from becoming a beggar, shopkeeper or hawker in India, also saves him from becoming a manual operator, piano tuner or basket-maker, the usual occupations of the blind in the United States at that time.

The school he learns what divorce is, what it is like, that Americans wear underpants and that peaches are to do with girls. He has about prejudices against Negroes; and his father thunders it. "At home we worried about the school might be for Negroes." He writes about being mistaken for one. On the holidays he works at an ice-cream parlor to date someone working there. He is at him and he has to be satisfied with the results. "I used to wait for our school bus to come, but I could hear Gladys munching her way through."

Mehta's autobiographical fashion and his "I" style, which he lovingly recreates, is a little tedious. There is the community of boys at school; there is the gym; the school bus; the day and sketches; of various things that were the initial trauma of grow-

ing up; and there is the piano teacher who tries to convert the Hindu boy to Christianity, begging him to pray with her beside the piano. Mehta, sweating and suffocating, says he must think. "Think!" she cried. "What is there to think when He is calling you?"

At the end of the book he is saddened by the fact that in later years his old school friends are not interested in discussing the past. I myself don't wish total amnesia on him, only selective amnesia. There is much trivia in this book, many letters from his father needlessly quoted, school reports, and over-long extracts from juvenile diaries. When a detail occurs to him he cannot resist giving it to us. "Lois cleared her throat in English class today. I thought of Mamajee's cough." Mehta is no Proust; he is not able to transform obsessive remembering into literature.

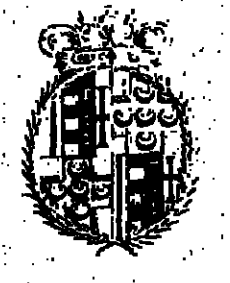
He can, though, give us a good sense of what it is to be blind. Sighted people often about as you as if you were stupid; or they try to pick you up and carry you across the street as if you were crippled poor; blind people often feel they are disappointments to their parents. And there is a terrifying, rather filmic description of his first solo shopping expedition in America: careering down the street to catch a trolley and crashing into a bench; nervous on the trolley that people will know that he is blind and, pitying him or worse, give up their seats for him; thinking bitterly, "no matter how we might excel in our terms, next to horses we would always appear to be jackasses".

It is difficult to know why this book has been written. Not because it is uninteresting or badly written but because Mehta has said it all before in his earlier autobiography *Face to Face*. That book covers a longer period but a third of it is taken up with the same material. In the Arkansas section the story told is the same; some chapter headings are the same, incidents are repeated, though some are slightly different, and his point of view has changed since 1951 when *Face to Face* was published. In *Sound-Shadow* Mehta has developed, added and embellished things, but it reads as if he has strained to do this. His story is better told more concisely, as in *Face to Face*, where we get a greater sense of a whole life.

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VCH

American notes

Christopher Hitchens

In contrast with what some Europeans affect to believe, America is a country remarkably free from taboo. There is practically no received or general opinion that is not subject to continual "revisionist" criticism, and very little "revisionist" work goes unchallenged itself. So self-critical are American scholars and historians, according to one major interpretation, that there has long been a need for a sturdy, nativist reaction against the tendency of intellectuals to commit *trahison* by "blaming America first".

You could say, very approximately, that the contending styles were represented by Gore Vidal and Norman Podhoretz. Vidal is cynical, patrician and assured. Podhoretz is sarcastic, demotic and, in the old sense of the term, enthusiastic. Vidal tends to approach matters with the maddening *de haut en bas*, ludic approach. Podhoretz takes a more pugnacious and protesting stance, insisting on the word "seriousness" at all times and punctuating it with the word "moral". Vidal pities those who take him too seriously, and Podhoretz resents those who fail to pay him the same compliment. If ever there was a Roundhead and Cavalier confrontation in the American culture, it would be drawn from characters of this kind.

I began by saying that the United States was remarkably free from taboo, and I must mention the grand exception. At least in New York and Washington and Los Angeles, every thinking person knows that any reference at all to Jewishness must be very well-guarded. I cannot think of any non-euphemistic way of putting the same point. And it may be useless to say that "everybody knows" that such is the case; except for the fact that no sensitive person denies it.

Now well launched on to the thin ice, I may as well say that I don't quarrel with this state of affairs. It is obviously right that the non-Jewish larger society should, however overdue its concern, evince the awareness of Jewish identity that was so disastrously wanting in the first half of the century. My sole reservation, which readers will just have to accept as genuine, is the erection of this compensation into something *unsayable*. That is, its appearance as a taboo: in America, something deemed unsayable is, sooner or later, bound to be said. And it may be said rather more heatedly as a result of its having been a taboo.

Every American journal of opinion, including newspapers and magazines which normally take no account of the doings of the literati, is presently in a minor state of convulsion. This state of convulsion results from the publication of an essay by Gore Vidal. Published as a reply to his critics in *The Nation* of March 22, it took the form of an attack on those who have accused him of being too "anti-American". Those who have been most forward in prosecuting this accusation are Norman Podhoretz and his wife, Midge Decter. Of this couple Vidal had this to say:

That wonderful wacky couple, Norman (Poddy) Podhoretz and his wife, Midge Decter, checked in. The Lunts of the right wing (Israeli Fifth column division) they are now, in their old age; more and more like refugees from a Woody Allen film: "The Purple Rose of West End Avenue".

And this:

Significantly, the one Yiddish word that has gained universal acceptance in this country is *chutzpah*. Exemplified in 1960, Mr and Mrs Podhoretz were in upstate New York. I was used to live, I was trying out a play at the Hyde Park Playhouse; the play was set during the Civil War. "Why," asked Poddy, "are you writing a play about, of all things, the Civil War?" I explained to him that my mother's family had fought for the Confederacy and my father's for the Union, and that the Civil War was in the United States what the Trojan War was in the Greeks, the great single event that continues to give resonance to our Republic. "Well, to me," said Poddy, "the Civil War is a synonym and as irrelevant as the War of 1812 or the Roses." I realised then that he was not planning to become an "assimilated American" to use the old-fashioned terminology; but rather, his first loyalty would always be to Israel.

That wasn't by any means the whole of it. Vidal also called for an alliance of the white races against the newly insurgent economic power of Asia - but it explains why players began to fall from the ceiling. In a sulphurous and widely-syndicated column, Podhoretz w-

cused Vidal of purposely resurrecting the old anti-Jewish "dual loyalty" innuendo. To quote him exactly:

Vidal's every word is drenched in hatred of Jews, whom in the best traditions of anti-Semitic thinking he portrays as all-powerful conspirators manipulating "us" to further their own nefarious purposes.

Nor would Podhoretz accept the argument that many critics of his own position were themselves Jewish:

From Karl Marx to Noam Chomsky - and, for that matter, to the current editor of *The Nation* - anti-Semitic and self-hating Jews have been a familiar presence in left-wing circles.

It may appear completely hopeless, and even feeble-mindedly neutral, to try and parse this disagreement. But the thing ought to be attempted.

What is the worst that can be said of Vidal? It's a moral certainty, for a start, that nobody else would have had a chance of getting the paragraphs above into print, and that if they had been uttered by a Christian fundamentalist *The Nation* would have roundly denounced them. (We cannot be sure what Podhoretz would have said in the latter case, because his magazine *Commentary* is silent at best on the millennialists who support Israel and distrust Jews.)

Not to leave the bill of indictment unfilled, it has to be said that the *New Republic* added a codicil. Its editors released a letter which Vidal had written to Thomas Kennealy some years ago. Kennealy had written a tepid review of Vidal's *Lincoln*, and received in riposte a letter that said, "You were doubtless picked up as a reviewer who had proven his Semitophilia; and so would give me a bad review."

So it's really a matter of deciding, as Vidal's *Lincoln* actually does say when accused of corruption, whether he has "established a character" that would lead people to believe the accusation. In other words, are statements made by Vidal (to be considered ironic, or mischievous, in a way that they would not be if uttered by another? If you put the question in this rather privileged way, you may feel (ladies and gentlemen of the jury) that Mr Vidal was attempting, in a rather acid way, to say the unseemly and to say it in a manner which could not escape attention. He does, after all, know

how many beans make five.

Vidal's defenders say that humour and irony are a defence in and of themselves. But a sense of humour is not the definition of a person's mood when he is off duty from being serious. If Vidal wished to wound by exaggeration, he should not pretend that his aim was not to wound. Does that make him a bigot or racistist? Even Richard Grenier, a leading conservative critic and former film reviewer for *Commentary*, answers this question in the negative. He writes that, "I do not consider Gore Vidal an anti-Semite" and adds, possibly to Vidal's rage, that "Mr Vidal, by contrast, is almost a caricature of the Tory type". He tells us that Vidal has told him that Jews are "the zealots of heterosexuality": a distinctive but perhaps not all that hurtful charge. But if Gore Vidal wished to be wounding, and was willing to risk the inevitable denunciation for trying to be so, what else can have stirred his anger? In a furious reply to Midge Decter for her famous anti-homosexual piece "The Boys On The Beach" (published in *The Nation* five years ago), Vidal quoted her as saying of "gays":

They themselves have engaged in a good deal of discriminatory practices against others. There are businesses and professions in which it is less than easy for a straight, unless he makes the requisite gesture of propitiation to the homosexual in power, to get ahead.

Vidal commented that this was, almost in so many words, analogous to antisemitism. Not a bad point but all the less reason, one might think, to replicate the same method in a later article.

The Podhoretzes got him going by calling him anti-American - a term which also carries a freight of bigotry and persecution. His first response, which was to say, "Of course I love my country. After all, I'm its current biographer", would have been fine. Some demon seems to have pushed him into going too far by adding, in effect, "And while we're on the subject of who's an American . . .". Norman Podhoretz calls this "incredibly impudent", but then he's rather free with charges of anti-Americanism and of antisemitism. He once wrote a huge piece for his own magazine, rather grandiloquently entitled "I Accuse", arguing that antisemitism lay behind the cri-

ticism of Israel's invasion of Lebanon. It would be a pity if a term like "antisemitism", which ought to be a very grave and solemn charge, were cheapened by propagandistic overuse.

The whole affair has involved countless round-robins and open letters, with everyone associated with *The Nation* invited to dissociate themselves. That's fair enough. But even as I was preparing this column, an occurrence interrupted it. Professor Edward Said, a distinguished and committed Palestinian, read of a death threat against himself in the public prints. *The Village Voice* carried an interview with the leader of the Jewish Defence League, which said that Said should die. Now, that's bad enough when you consider the number of Smerdyakovs and imitative crime-artists. But the threat followed real and frightening attacks on Said's office and home. I have yet to read of a single denunciation by any Jewish spokesman of this state of affairs - which is by any standards more atrocious than a vindictive piece by Gore Vidal.

So, without even a rag of authority in this matter, I propose a truce and invite comment on it:

- 1) Mr Vidal, famous as he may be for irony and understatement, should repudiate the "dual loyalty" insinuation in rounder terms than he has so far.
- 2) Mr Podhoretz should recognize that there are alternative categories to his head-i-win-tails-you-lose choice between "anti-semitic" and "self-hating Jew".
- 3) All sides should agree to identify their ironic remarks by a special typeface or font of print, perhaps to be called "ten point ironic bold". This would minimize the chances of future rancorous misunderstandings.
- 4) The attacks on, and threat to the life of, Professor Said should be denounced as angrily and unambiguously as any imputation on the loyalty and good faith of the Podhoretz family.

I have no confidence that these standards or suggestions will be adopted and (since I work for *The Nation*) no reason to assume that they will appear as disinterested. But civility here is in grave danger of being permanently poisoned.

Like Murray Kempton, Alexander Cockburn and Christopher Hitchens. The tone, so far as one can pin it down these days, is part-*Nation*, part-*New Yorker*.

On poetry and fiction, there is a willingness to offer space, but no special disposition, no group loyalty, so far as I can tell, and one can usually expect a stylish competence in most of what it prints. In the current issue (Vol. 5, no. 2) the British are well represented: there's a nice story by Douglas Dunn; a not-so-nice poem by Gavin Ewart, and review-articles by Christopher Hitchens (on Parakh) and D.A.N. Jones (on Orson Welles). The reviewing side of *Grand Street* has been strengthened most impressively of late, so that the thing is beginning to feel more like a magazine, less like an anthology. The Greek interest is still on display, though, with no less than three pieces on the poet George Seferis, along with an essay by Peter Green called "The New Urban Culture" (new, it happily turns out, means *new*).

At \$5 for almost 250 pages, *Grand Street* is bargain; and it seems all the more so when one notes its tiny circulation: some 2,000 copies. Maybe this is what's worrying the goat. If so, I think a noisebomb of new orders should be mailed at once to *Grand Street*. British subscribers should send international money orders of \$5 for four issues. All in all, and especially in the department of literary history, the magazine now has a liveliness and variety unmatched by any comparable publication in the United States.

Penguin Books have recently published the first complete and unexpurgated edition of William S. Burroughs's novel *Junk*, which originally appeared in 1933 as *Junkies* under the name of William Lee. (588pp, £2.50, 0-14-04351-9). The Penguin edition has an introduction by Allen Ginsberg.

Letters

The Future of the Oxford English Dictionary

Sir, - I write with reference to the review by Pat Rogers of Volume Four of *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* (May 19). In the course of the review, Professor Rogers touched on the computerization of the OED, which is currently being undertaken by the Oxford University Press. I should like, if I may, to correct any misleading impressions of this project which your readers may have gained from the review.

The project to computerize the OED (known as the New OED Project) has been broken down into a number of stages. The first stage consists of the keyboarding of the entire text of the OED and of all four volumes of the Supplement, the computer-assisted merging of the text of the Supplement into the main Dictionary, and the publication of the resulting integrated version in the form of a printed book (in at least sixteen volumes) in 1989. This part of the project is being carried out with the assistance of IBM United Kingdom Ltd.

Soon after this, OUP plan to make the electronic version of the integrated text publicly available as a database. The database will almost certainly be supplied on-line through one or more of the major database companies. The OUP also hope to distribute the database on compact disks. It is believed that by the early 1990s the use of databases stored on compact disks and accessed by means of a micro-computer linked to a compact disk player will be fairly widespread. There will be great advantages in this technology for searches of the New OED database. The disks will be portable (far more so than the sixteen volumes of the OED) and relatively cheap; they could be frequently replaced with new disks containing updated versions of the database. Database searches will be entirely under the user's control and without the telecommunications charges associated with the use of on-line databases. The design of a database management system is being carried out by the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

Meanwhile the electronic version of the Dictionary will be used by OUP lexicographers as a means of revising and updating the contents. The database structure will enable them to tackle themes (such as pronunciation or scientific definitions) throughout the text instead of plodding through every entry from A to Z. After several years of revising the old and adding in the new, OUP plan once again to publish a conventional, printed edition.

FIFTY YEARS ON

The magazine *New Writing* first appeared in the Spring of 1936, at six shillings per issue. It was reviewed in the TLS on May 30.

Mr Lehmann's "Manifesto", though reasonably unpretentious, does not take one far. "New Writing", it announces hopefully, "will appear twice yearly, and will be devoted to imaginative writing, mainly of young authors". Also, aiming at providing an outlet for prose writers, and sometimes poets, whose work is "worthwhile in length or style" for the "established" magazines, "New Writing" is "not and foremost interested in literature, and though it does not intend to open its pages to pieces of reactionary or Fascist sentiments, it is independent of any political party."

Individual quality is high and there is plenty of variety. The authors are of eight nationalities (half the pieces are translations); and of the fifteen five are English; two Irish, three German, four Russian, and one each Spanish, Sicilian, Chinese and French, while Mr Lehmann's own contribution, "scenes from a travelogue in the Caucasus", Mr Ralph Bates is very good in a short but firm picture of childhood in a Spanish village. Mr Christopher Isherwood shows working-class life in contemporary Berlin with equal objectivity. Two effective episodes of the War are presented by Herr Alfred Dörmann and Mr T. H. Wintgraham, and a very funny Italian author vividly describes the return of refugees in Sicily to obey the original order of the Fascist war in Abyssinia. Nikolai Gogol's sketches of Soviet Russia are gay and amusing as Herr Egon Ervin

Kisch's is dreadful and solemn. No less dreadful but more moving than the latter is Anna Seghers's incident of a group of prisoners in a Nazi barracks forced to repeat the Lord's Prayer while one by one they are beaten to the ground. Matters less drastic and nearer home are presented by Mr Charles Harte, Mr John Hampson, Mr William Plomer, Mr Ralph Fox, Mr Gore Graham, and, notably well, in a study of a respectful but unassertive tutor, Mr Edward Upward. . . . Mr Stephen Spender's four poems (three of them translations from Hölderlin) are minor pieces, and Mr Alec Brown's "English version" of Pasternak's "1905", though interesting, obviously succeeds as poetry for all its spasmodic vigour.

The conception of an effective brotherhood born between victims of oppression, is the constant element, or the nearest to a constant element, which gives this miscellany its claim to unity. The oppression takes various forms: sometimes it is war, sometimes fascism, sometimes the social system, sometimes human nature or even the hard earth itself; but always it is this sense of broader comradeships breaking through the hard shells of confining, destroying individualisms, which is the basic creative thing: "a new life bursting through the old". . . . For in the best of the items emotional identification - the essence of brotherhood - is no mere aspiration; the writer himself has experienced it; entering into the lives of his characters. The writing, eager to tell its story, takes on an almost athletic quality! If it is not all strictly "new", undoubtedly the bulk of it is fresh.

EDMUND WEINER.
New Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford.

Sir, - Although I much enjoyed Pat Rogers's article on the OED Supplement (May 9), I hope he is not asking us to accept the malformed *misinformation* on the authority of one of Clive James's feeble witticisms.

NIALL RUDD.
Department of Classics and Archaeology, University of Bristol, 11 Woodland Road, Bristol.

Disease and the Novel

Sir, - I would like to add a word to the already much-discussed question of "disease and the novel". Your reviewer (December 13, 1985) remarked that "two points in particular will strike any reader approaching this book The first is the absence of any great English novel of disease. The second is the restricted view of disease which emerges from its treatment in the novel." *Disease and the Novel, 1880-1960* and the review overlook one of the very great novels on the subject, Henry James's *The Wings of the Dove* and his late preface, which takes up most of the questions your reviewer raised. Indeed that novel is so "crafted" as to answer many of the questions discussed in the correspondence. James avoided all scenes of death and dying and dealt only with the effect of the dying on the living. Otherwise handled, the subject becomes a characteristic video "soap opera". HJ's words in his preface are celebrated - and I am astonished no notice has been taken of them in this entire discussion: "The poet essentially cannot be concerned with the act of dying. Let him deal with the sickest of the sick, it is still by the

act of living that they appeal to him and appeal the more as the conditions plot against them and prescribe the battle."

LEON EDEL.
3187 Lurline Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816.

Duff Cooper

Sir, - David Pryce-Jones is entitled to his prejudices, but he should not let them get in the way of accuracy. In his review of my biography of Duff Cooper (May 16) he states that I omit to mention the irony that the Coopers acquired their lease on Chantilly on the same terms as Otto Abetz; I do not mention it because, as a reading of the book will show Mr Pryce-Jones, it is not true. The Coopers acquired the lease from the former American Ambassador, Bill Bullitt, who had leased the house from the Institut de France before the war. Whatever terms Abetz held the house on, I doubt whether they were similar to Bullitt's. The insinuation in Mr Pryce-Jones's comment is as unworthy as it is inaccurate.

JOHN CHARMLEY.
209 Earham Road, Norwich.

The Domesday Book

Sir, - Some of your reviewers go to great trouble to point out errors, but H. R. Loyn in his review of books on Domesday (May 16) passes over one, *The Domesday Book: England's heritage, then and now*, without saying that it abounds in errors and misleading statements.

These are not in the direct references to Domesday entries, but in the county gazetteers which attempt to give snippets of topical or historical information on each place. Stamford is credited with a ruined Norman castle (it has no such thing); Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, with a Norman church (there is nothing earlier than the fourteenth century) and Hambledon, Hampshire, with a never-existing priory. Thatch, it is implied, originated in Thaxted; the district of Purbeck, in Dorset, has supposedly vanished. The sprawling Black Country town of Blaxwick (like Cove, Hampshire) is described as "lost", while the inhabitants of neighbouring West Bromwich will be surprised to learn that mining is still their main industry. Bradford's importance as a wool town was apparently in the Middle Ages, later properly being derived from silk and cotton: Leeds Castle (Kent) is said to have replaced a wooden Saxon castle - but the Saxons built no castles, wooden or otherwise. Portlade, now part of Hove, was apparently on a pilgrim route to

Canterbury, while parchment, we are told, has been made in Havanit for nearly a thousand years.

Perhaps the prize entry is under Belgrave, now part of Leicester, which runs: "It was the site of the city's only suburban railway station when the Great Central Railway was built in the 1890s." This one may be true, but for supremely useless and irrelevant information it takes some beating. These errors and infelicities are, for the most part, individually trivial, but there are dozens of them, and the reviewer might have picked up two or three.

D. W. LLOYD.
17 Fore Street, Old Harlow, Essex.

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D. W. LLOYD.
17 Fore Street, Old Harlow, Essex.

The Problem of God

Sir, - Brian Pippard writes (May 23), "The classic dichotomy of Mind and Matter remains as absolute as ever." This applies only to the world projected as objective by the Western mind. Because of this, opposites are not on the same level and appear antagonistic.

In Eastern cultures man experiences the world as subjective, as immediately related to himself. This conception is basic to Eastern philosophy, religion and society. With their common origin in an immanent godhead, subject and object, mind and matter, as well as all other opposites, are seen as two sides of the same thing. In other words, the dichotomy is of our own making.

To find an answer to "the problem of God" as well as to many other problems we could do no better than take the East seriously.

GÉRYKE YOUNG.
37 Abbotsbury House, London W14.

Paisley Pattern

Sir, - In his review of *The Concise Scots Dictionary* (May 9) Edwin Morgan casually remarked on the phrase "to get aff at Paisley", which, he said, meant to practise coitus interruptus.

The multi-volume *Scottish National Dictionary* is silent on this usage, and my Scots friends have never heard of it and are unable to explain it, though one of them hazarded the opinion that there was a railway station called "Love Street Halt" in Paisley.

Can any of your readers offer an alternative explanation for this rather unusual euphemism?

J. P. KENYON.
82 Hepburn Gardens, St Andrews, Fife.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 286
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than June 20. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - (in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration).

Entries, marked "Author, Author 286" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on June 27.

1 Names. Pilbeam - Kenardington - Penardington - Ardington - Lindock - Sturch - Morrison-Morgan - Malow - Newcome - Ludovick - Bream - Breach - Denaher - Ilcombe - Doanard - Camberbridge - Marl (or place) - Norington - Froy (or place) - Trumper - Husk - Vinty - Dunrose - Milrose - Croy - Match - Midmore.

2 From his girle hung a row of seastones which dangled at every movement of his portentous frame and on these were graven with rude yet striking art the tribal images of many frail heroes and heroines of antiquity. Cuchulain, Conn of the Hundred Battles . . . Dark Roonaleen, Patrick W. Shakespeare, Brian Connolly, Mungah Gutsenberg, Patricia Velasquez, Captain Nemo, Tristan and Isolde, the first Prince of Wales, Thomas Cook and Son, the Bold Soldier Boy, Arrah na Pogue.

3 Item to Chry Morgan and also Chry.
Burgess and Ben. Bones and Hector MacIver And Robert Dunsell and Norman Cameron I leave a keg of whiskey, the sweet deceiver.

Competition No 276
Winner: Keith Anderson
Answers:
1 Is this my pale little elf? Is this my innard-reddest?

This little sunny-faced girl with the dimpled cheek and rosy lips; the satin-smooth hazel hair, and the radiant hazel eyes? (It had green eyes, reader; but you must excuse the mistake).

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, chapter 24.

2 "My mind was more agreeably engaged. I have been meditating on the very great pleasure which a pair of fine eyes in the face of a pretty woman can bestow."

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, chapter 6.

3 "What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue."

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Act 1.

Entries are invited for this year's Commonwealth Poetry Prize, sponsored by British Airways and awarded in the following categories: best published volume of poems by any author; best volume by a first-time published poet; and separate world area awards for Africa, the Americas (Canada/Caribbean), Asia, Australasia/Pacific and UK/Europe. The prize is open to all poets who are currently citizens of Commonwealth national language. provided that English translations accompany the submitted work (entries in English translation will be judged on the artistic merit of the translation). Publishers are requested to submit titles published between July 1, 1985, and June 30, 1986; three copies of each title are required, with translations if appropriate. Closing date for entries is July 14, 1986; further information from The Commonwealth Institute, Kensington, High Street, London W8 6AG.

COMMENTARY

Womanist perspectives

Peter Kemp

Alice Walker and the Color Purple Omnibus
BBC1

The trouble with William Faulkner's black woman, Dilsey, in *The Sound and the Fury*, Alice Walker complained on *Omnibus*, is that "she has no context". Eager to avoid this error, Samira Osman's film, *Alice Walker and The Color Purple*, brought background into the foreground. Stressing that Walker's fiction is "deeply rooted in the past of Eatonville", her Georgia hometown, it rambled among the verandah-ed mansions formerly belonging to white plantation owners and instructively poked around a shack once occupied by the Walker family and still decorated with the brown-paper-bags they had to use as wallpaper.

Part of this tour of Eatonville was supplied by the author's brother, who pointed out such family landmarks as the store where their father - defying death-threats - cast the first black vote in the county. Remoter ancestors received attention, too. Strolling among the lopsided grey stones of a local cemetery, Alice Walker explained that *The Color Purple* (1983) - her novel set in the segregated South of the 1920s and 30s - exhumes several of her forebears. Celie, its crushed heroine, represents a reincarnation of her step-grandmother, a woman "nobody ever really knew because she was so battered down". The man responsible

for this battering - Walker's grandfather, also resurrected in the book - was typical of many black males of that period and place, she observed, in trying to boost self-esteem by subjecting his wife to the brutal ignominy he encountered from whites.

All this past is powerfully present in *The Color Purple* - as are other historical dimensions. Celie's story of degeneration and regeneration in the Deep South is counterpointed by the experiences of her sister Nettie who is a missionary in Africa. The village life discovered there emerges as a lost heritage - though one viewed with tough unsentimentality: alongside pride are ugly instances of prejudice. This African past - ignored by *Omnibus* - constitutes an important aspect of Walker's writing. Ethnic origins and folk traditions fascinate her - and not only those of her own people. The destruction of the culture of America's Indians is lamented in one novel, where the numinous is quenched with asphalt as a sacred burial-site gets desecrated into a fun-park.

Archive film of black labourers dragging sacks around cotton fields or hacking with a kind of bitter listlessness at sugar cane reminded you of the world out of which Alice Walker emerged (even her surname, she remarked, harks back to a slave-ancestress who trudged from Virginia to Georgia). A less familiar perspective on to black exploitation was opened up through reference to Phillis Wheatley, "negro servant to Mr Wheatley", whose *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral* made her something of a society pet in the seventeenth century. Wheatley, Alice Walker revealed, is one of her literary enthusiasms - as is the twentieth-century writer, Zora Neale Hurston. Characteristically, what she relishes in them is their documenting of earlier phases of black experience: there's "a lot of record-keeping" in Wheatley; Hurston wrote partly as an anthropologist. Both have been ridiculed by black radicals, so Walker's championing of them is additional testimony to her challenging of oppression - even in its more subtle ideological forms.

Walker's involvement with the Civil Rights Movement was rather by-passed in this programme because of concentration on *The Color Purple* and its filming. Some nice ironies were pointed up, though - as with coverage of a benefit performance of *The Color Purple* in a once-segregated cinema in Eatonville. Less cheering was some specious-sounding justification from Steven Spielberg about his box-office bowdlerizations when transferring the book to the screen.

Contrasting with his haverings and equivocations was a moment when Walker briskly defined why she calls herself not a feminist but a "womanist". The word, she explained, derives "from the black folk expression of mothers to female children, 'You acting womanish'... usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behaviour". Adding to this the connotations, "a woman who loves other women" and "wanting to know more in greater depth than is considered 'good' for one", she turned the term into a portmanteau description of the behaviour most extensively exhibited in her novels. Militancy, female solidarity, and knowledge are the values her books cherish, with the last seen, as especially liberating. Freed from under-privilege by scholarships herself, Walker always presents education as a major means of emancipation. In *Meridian*, 1982, the heroine's schoolteacher mother is castigating for failing to pass useful knowledge on to younger women. *The Color Purple* shows Nettie teaching and learning valuably in Africa; information frees characters from guilt or inhibition; learning to read is a crucial accomplishment. Busting with facts itself, *Omnibus*'s film demonstrated a similar instructive aim.

The 1986 Pegasus Book Prize, for a non-fiction work which has contributed most to "an understanding of women's position in society today", has been won by Marina Warner, for *Monuments and Maidens: An Allegory of the Female Form*, 1985. The short list included *Women and the Law* by Susan Atkins and Brenda Hoggett (Blackwell) and *Pier* by Beate Campbell (Penguin).

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Press gangs

Michael Davie

DAVID WILLIAMSON
Sons of Cain
Wyndham's Theatre

The doings of writers and reporters are notoriously difficult to show on the screen or stage. Many good journalists, in life, are modest, even tidy, characters, capable of quiet hard work and ordinary home lives; but a journalist in a fictional drama is almost invariably male, drunk, dishevelled, and given to shouting at his employers.

In David Williamson's new play, *Sons of Cain*, the first appearance of his hero causes the heart to sink. He is a classic stereotype: foul-mouthed, dependent on whisky, lamenting his ruined physical condition, nursing the wounds of a wrecked marriage, and hitching half-heartedly at his sagging trousers. When he is persuaded by his old mate, now a well-tailored and blow-dried executive, to take on the editorship of an ailing newspaper with a brief to expose corruption in Australia, the prospect that anything novel, entertaining, or powerful will take place on the stage seems unlikely. But in some measure the play has all these qualities. Williamson does not avoid clichés, but he uses them with skill, making them work for him.

The story reflects recent events in New South Wales: the backdrop of the clever and effective set shows the skyline of Sydney. The state is in the grip of drug dealers, crooked policemen, and venal lawyers and politicians. Pay-offs and cover-ups are rife, and the ruling Labor Party premier is blandly complacent. The press has been tamed by fear of the libel laws or by anxiety about falling circulations; and the readers, it seems, are content to be fed bromides by the politicians and "lifestyle" trivia by the journalists. The new editor, however, is not interested in circulation; he replaces his predecessor's visual display unit with

his portable typewriter, hires three new women reporters, and sets to work. A disillusioned and honest ex-policeman supplies him with tapes of telephone conversations, apparently between a corrupt lawyer and a state minister. The first half of the play concerns the battle to get the tapes published; the second half explores the aftermath when a judge, probably suborned, declares their use as evidence inadmissible, the newspaper's proprietor reconsiders his reluctant support after an old school friend is implicated, and the staff question the editor's methods and motives.

Although serious, the play is very funny. One of Williamson's gifts as a playwright and screen writer has always been his sure use of the wry, quintessentially Australian idiom. The play crackles with very Australian jokes and the humour is much more subtle than it was in the comic strip farce of *Pravda*, last year's big newspaper drama. Max Cullen, who plays the editor, has the best of the lines, which are deployed to reveal that despite his rough exterior he is an emotional weakling. The three women reporters are stronger characters than their editor. Again, although they seem on first impression to be stereotypes - a blase radical with a sister who is an addict; a tough older woman with dreams of a rich husband; and a perky feminist who pines for a real man-their characters, like the whole play, are more subtle than at first appears. Williamson does not pretend that the decisions the editor takes the paper's manager and proprietor to take are easy.

Sons of Cain is not mainly interested in character or motive, and the plot, though adequate, is not the point either. What Williamson has done is to write a contemporary morality play, in which a battered warrior for truth takes on the dark powers of corruption and greed. Both in the writing and in the fine performance by Max Cullen you sense a real passion, a sense of outrage that Australia, once a country offering the promise of a fresh start, should now be perverted and undermined by moral cowardice and crooks.

Sin in the streets

Philip Horne

After Hours
Warner West End Cinema

"You don't pay for your sins in church, but in the streets", said the voice of Martin Scorsese at the very start of his *Mean Streets* (1973). The streets in question then were those of New York's Little Italy. In *After Hours*, after twelve years in which Scorsese has made *Taxi Driver*, *New York, New York*, *Raging Bull* and *King of Comedy*, the streets have become those of SoHo, but the guilt is no less intense. *After Hours* is funny and terrible and draining, as much a horror film as a comedy, fiercely and disturbingly surreal in its lurid detail, almost perfectly consistent in its plotting.

It has the shape of the best horror films - and perhaps of the best comedies - in that its story of realized anxieties is framed and pointed as an externalization of the central character's unease. Scorsese's complex cinematic style - constant movement of the camera, use of slow motion and fast editing and not-quite "natural" sound to convey the rhythms of excitement - hurries us into the fraught perceptual world of the yuppie Paul (Griffin Dunne), whose 11.32pm excursion, on a sudden date from his East 51st Street apartment, downtown into unrespectable SoHo seems to go so recurrently wrong.

Paul overflows with guilty apologies. Near the end, trapped and desperate, he goes down on his knees in the middle of the street, and looks straight up at where the camera, thirty feet above, has a God's eye view. "What do you want from me?", he asks. "What have I done? I'm just a word processor, for Christ's sake!" He is persecuted by objects, by events, by chance remarks and ultimately by a vigilante mob who take him for a burglar and whose searching flashlight are associated with one manically wielded by Martin Scorsese himself, glimpsed overhead in the pink "Club Ber-



Zeus from the sea at Artemisium, about 460-50 BC; reproduced from Greek Sculpture, reviewed below.

Tangible evidence

L. F. Cook

JOHN BOARDMAN

Greek Sculpture: The classical period: a handbook
Dapp, Thames and Hudson. £12.50.
085234191

It has become a truism in the defence of new studies in Classics that each generation must re-evaluate the evidence and make its own assessment of Greek and Roman civilization. In archaeology that defence is scarcely required, since each generation must assimilate and interpret newly discovered evidence which constantly appears in quantities unmatched in other branches of classical studies, even papyrology. It would be difficult to find an institution, at least in Britain, where this challenge has been met more consistently than the Linde Chair of Art and Archaeology at Oxford, with its four successive incumbents. The chapters written between 1924 and 1928 for various editions of the old *Cambridge Ancient History* by J. D. (later Sir John) Beazley and Bernard Ashmole (then still Yates Professor in London) were republished as *Greek Sculpture and Pottery* in 1932. They served as a standard introduction to the subject for many years, being reprinted as recently as 1966. Ashmole's successor, Martin Robertson, produced a monumental *History of Greek Art* (1975), which gave the lie to the strictures of Beazley and Ashmole against big books. The present Lincoln edition, by Professor Boardman, is continuing the tradition with a series of handbooks of which this is the fourth, two earlier volumes having dealt with Archaic vase-painting, the third with Archaic Greek sculpture.

Professor Boardman's scholarly output is prodigious and he has made significant original contributions in several areas. He has been an archaeologist for many years and his handbooks clearly reflect that experience not only in his style of writing, which often has a conversational tone reflecting the lectures he has given more than the study, but also in his recognition that in many respects the Greek world was fundamentally alien place, even for those best qualified to recognize our cultural debt to it. Those beginning to approach the problems of Greek sculpture in the classical period, to whom the book is primarily addressed, would be well advised to heed his warning: "Full appreciation is beyond our wit but the attempt is a necessary reward enough". The problem which constantly besets stu-

dent and critic, archaeologist and art historian alike is the fragmentary nature of the evidence, in particular the relative scarcity of original works. Boardman's approach is rigorous. Throughout the book he concentrates as far as possible on originals. Later copies cannot be avoided, for they often provide the only tangible evidence we have to put flesh on the rather skeletal accounts of ancient sculpture that have survived in the writings of men like the encyclopaedist Pliny and the travel-writer Pausanias. Boardman keeps these copies firmly in their place, usually segregated in separate chapters.

His opinions on the attributions proposed for many classical sculptures must be sought in the detailed captions to individual illustrations. In general he remains sceptical about the validity of many attributions and even about the value of the scholarly method which underlies them - "perhaps the oddest phenomenon in all Classical scholarship". He does accept some attributions - such as Myron's Discus-thrower, recognized since the eighteenth century on the basis of numerous Roman copies and an unusually detailed description by Lucian - but many attributions freely accepted elsewhere are either suppressed or recorded only with an explicit warning or an almost audible lack of enthusiasm. Even the celebrated Ephelean Amazons do not tempt him to commit himself.

Nor do the two bronze figures found in the sea off Riace in 1972, which have been variously attributed to the otherwise obscure Onatas and to no less a master than Phidias. These statues are forcing scholars to rewrite the history of Greek sculpture in the middle of the fifth century BC (they were not available to Robertson) and a consensus has yet to be reached on their attribution, likely original provenance, even on their date. (For those who wish to pursue the Riace bronzes further, required reading now includes the third volume in the *Special Series of Bollettino d'Arte*.)

A welcome feature of the book is an exposition of Boardman's interpretation of the Parthenon frieze, which, apart from its presentation as a memorable television programme, had previously been available only in scholarly works published abroad and rarely to be found outside specialized libraries. Professor Boardman's view that the horsemen and the passenger in the chariots represent the Athenian heroes who perished at Marathon being presented to the gods of Olympus has much to commend it. Indeed the book is a whole to be commended: it will be read with profit by all but the most learned, and with pleasure by all.

Festal sublimities

Penelope Wilson

ANNE PIPPIN BURNETT

The Art of Bacchylides
207pp. Harvard University Press. £20.50.
0674046668
D. S. CARNE-ROSS
Pindar
195pp. Yale University Press. £25 (paperback, £6.95).
0300033834

According to Thomas de Quincey, "the chief thing to say as to Pindar is - to show cause, good and reasonable, why no man of sense should trouble his head about him". Poets and pedagogues since the Renaissance have struggled against the odds to find a way of regaining cultural access to the odes in which "the prince of lyric poets" celebrated the athletic champions of his time. The apparent discrepancy between the sporting occasion and the elaborate and mythic grandeur of his victory ("epinician") odes led to the construction of a satisfyingly personalized "Pindaric" image of wild and inspired irrelevance. The problems are now seen more as a matter of genre than of individual eccentricity. In his eleventh ode, for example, Pindar's contemporary Bacchylides celebrates a South Italian boy's wrestling victory in the Pythian games with what appears to be a hugely inappropriate tale of female lunacy, of the maddened daughters of Proteus howling across the woods and pastures of Arcadia. The myth may relate clearly enough at one level to the criticism already expressed of the "wandering wits" of an earlier set of judges who had denied the boy victory at Olympia; but the modern reader, unsure in any case where to draw the line between legitimate celebration and unctuous flattery, may still feel entitled to wonder at the literary etiquette of this mythological dilation on the theme of shooting the referee.

Studies of the victory ode tend therefore to find themselves on the defensive. Both the books under review properly find the formal grammar of victor-praise, seen by some modern scholars as the key to all epinician problems, too limited a means of accounting for the individual achievements of the two poets. Anne Pippin Burnett's way of bringing the reader to terms with what she calls "the epinician burden" in Bacchylides is to open out the larger artistic vision of each ode through close analysis of Bacchylides' manipulations of his fictional and generic materials. Her method is well illustrated in her reading of the interlocking myths and motifs of Ode 11, placing the vagaries of judges and daughters within a central celebration not merely of a victory but of the strength of the city itself against a backdrop of error and wilderness. Each case is closely contextualized, and backed in the notes with a wealth of scholarly material and discussion - the chapter on "Theseas" dive". In the non-epinician Ode 17, a song for Delian Apollo, offers a fascinating compilation of the evidence about leaps and dives in antiquity.

If Pindar's after-life has been one of engaged controversy, Bacchylides has suffered from an unenviable consensus in which - long before the discovery at the end of the nineteenth century of the papyrus containing the remains of fifteen odes and six "dithyrambs" - he was

known simply as Pindar's boringly competent rival. "Would you not rather be Pindar than Bacchylides?" asked "Longinus" in the first century AD, and it is clear from the passing references in D. S. Carne-Ross's book that the nature as well as the habit of the comparison survives more or less unchanged: again and again Pindar's special quality is defined in relation to this "modest, somewhat anonymous performer". In her welcome full-length critical study of Bacchylides, Burnett generally eschews explicit comparative assessments, but she does introduce a challenging new element into the traditional picture in her emphasis on the tragic flavour of Bacchylides' ethical vision, the vision which presents heroes moving with less assurance than Pindar's in a landscape of uncertainty. "The Bacchylidean gods were further away": Heracles weeps for his own fate as he views its shadowy outline in Meleager's ghost.

Burnett's work is accorded the full format of erudition, the critical discussion supplemented with the full Greek text of the odes treated as well as a translation and with nearly fifty pages of scholarly notes. Carne-Ross's *Pindar* appears in the *Hermes* series, whose aim, as stated by the general editor John Herington, is to "guide the general reader to a dialogue with the classical masters rather than to acquaint him or her with the present state of scholarly research". There are virtually no footnotes, and Greek script is allowed to appear only as a curiously typographical gneissification signalling the gap between our own "given world" and Pindar's voice. For Carne-Ross the solution to modern difficulties with Pindar's forms and values is less a matter of interpretation than of the re-education of the reader, who is constantly urged towards a Nietzschean acceptance of the transfiguring and erotic power of victory in the hands of a master-poet, a festal sublimity in which the sweetness of celebration is fused with the violence of contest. He, too, offers readings of individual odes, but couched in a vocabulary so dominantly evaluative as to insist that we not so much understand as reverent them. The policy is to establish "contact" with Pindar - for example through association with modernist poetry - before allowing us to knit our brows over him. Carne-Ross's selection of odes for this purpose is interestingly and profitably at variance with the traditional rankings, and he shows a clear preference for the more relaxed Agestean odes over the "big poems", like the first Pythian, produced for the Sicilian tyrants. Despite the intrusiveness of the over-anxious humanist polemic, there is much that is fresh and stimulating in his observations on individual odes.

Carne-Ross's Pindaric register will have its aficionados among like-minded classicists, and "general readers". Paradoxically however it is this introductory work which in the end places us as helplessly estranged from the voices of the past, while the specialist researches of Burnett generate an excitement that might well - were it not for the old assumption that scholarship alienates common readers - tempt a newcomer further into the Greek choral ode.

Princeton University Press have recently published the first English translation of P. A. Wolf's *Prolegomena to Homer*, 1795 (265pp. £30.25, 0 691 06639 6). The translators also provide an introduction and notes.

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Willibald Sauerländer

Émile Mâle
Religious Art in France: The Thirteenth Century: A study of medieval iconography and its sources
Translated by Marthiel Mathews
564pp. Princeton University Press. £57.60.
0 691 09913 8

Émile Mâle's *L'Art religieux du XIII^e siècle en France* was first published in 1898, curiously enough in the same year as Huysmans's famous neo-Catholic novel *La Cathédrale*. No other book on medieval art has ever had a comparable success. No fewer than nine editions had appeared by 1958. Not only very learned but written with a suave poetic elegance, Mâle's book charmed readers from the most unexpected quarters, but it aroused uneasy feelings in the "jury" at the Sorbonne, where he presented it as a thesis. "Certain chapters", one reads in the official report of the dean, "combine the merits of research with the charm of an ingenious, animated and lively presentation which recalls sometimes the poetry of the Golden Legend." And then it continues with academic sternness: "I have been tempted to blame the author for a purely artistic and relatively free inspiration. Above all I found that the author had himself carried away by a somewhat mystic admiration for the Middle Ages."

One of the first enthusiastic admirers of Mâle's *L'Art religieux du XIII^e siècle* was Marcel Proust. In 1900 he cited the book in an article on Ruskin's "Bible of Amiens" and later he used passages from Mâle as a source for his description of the church at Balbec in *A la Recherche du temps perdu*. Another fascinated reader was D'Annunzio, who quarried Mâle's text for the prologue of his *Martyre de Saint Sébastien*, first presented by Ida Rubinstein at the Théâtre du Châtelet in 1911. Mâle's book is not only a monument of scholarship but also a part of the history of French literature at the turn of the century.

Medieval religious iconography had not been studied seriously before 1840. The rediscovery of the Catholic past of France came as a reaction to the Voltairian blasphemies of the Enlightenment and the Jacobin destructions of the Revolution. In 1833 De Montalambert published his "Lettre sur le vandalisme en France". In 1844 appeared the first part of Didron's never completed *Iconographie chrétienne*, which dealt with the "Histoire de Dieu". Then followed an uninterrupted stream

of manuals, periodicals and monographs of Christian iconography, which were mostly produced by learned and pious fathers or abbés. The most outstanding of these publications, the four-volume *Mélanges d'archéologie, d'histoire et de littérature sur le moyen âge*, which remains today a mine of information, was the work of two Jesuits: Charles Cahier and Arthur Martin. Émile Mâle, born in 1862, was the late heir of this nineteenth-century Catholic tradition. But he transformed it with a unique force of synthesis and a rare literary gift, and made medieval religious iconography part of a modern aesthetic culture. In 1907 Proust wrote to Mâle: "I have often thought of you these days in turning the pages of these bulky, undigested books such as the *Caractéristiques des Saints* of Father Cahier".

L'Art religieux du XIII^e siècle is an admirably structured book. With a stroke of genius Mâle organized his presentation of the bewildering profusion of imagery in Gothic cathedrals along the lines of a great scholastic summa, the *Speculum Majus* by Vincent of Beauvais. In this way he was able to handle the cathedral like a book, to consult it like an encyclopaedia, neatly divided into sections and chapters. He starts with the "mirror of nature" and looks on the plants and beasts visible on the buildings. He speaks of the symbols of the Evangelists, of the bestiary and the marvels of the East. Next he ascends to the "Speculum doctrinale", the "mirror of learning", and explains the calendars which show the skills and the tools necessary for manual labour. From there he carries on to philosophy and the liberal arts, the labour of the mind. He concludes: "Work in all its forms is to be respected: such is the lesson taught by the cathedral."

"Nature, knowledge, virtue" — this is the sequence of the *Speculum Majus*. So the following chapter rises to the "mirror of morals" and deals brilliantly with the iconography of the virtues and vices. By far the longest and most complex part of the book, however, is devoted to the fourth and last mirror, the "Speculum historiale". Here we pass from the Old Testament to the Gospels, from the traditional legends to the *Legenda Aurea*, and after an interpolation on Antiquity we finish with the end of history, the Apocalypse and the Last Judgment. The order of this presentation is superb. The book is a masterpiece of rational classification. The thirteenth-century portal at Amiens is for Mâle as comprehensive and systematic as Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*. Religious art in the thirteenth century is the harmonious union of reason and faith

achieved by the genius of France. "The ideas embodied in our cathedrals were the common patrimony of Catholic Europe. But France alone was able to make of the cathedral an image of the world, a summary of history, and a mirror of moral life." It was this unique blend of intellectual lucidity and religious conviction, that assured the success of the work.

After nearly a century, Mâle's intellectual and moral achievement requires to be read in historical perspective. In 1898, in the critical years before the separation of Church and State in France, *L'Art religieux du XIII^e siècle* was written as a combative apologia. It was a poetically moving refutation of the laicizing ideas of Victor Hugo and Viollet-le-Duc on the anti-clerical and democratic character of Gothic art. After 400 pages of demonstration Mâle sums up triumphantly: "No. The artists of the Middle Ages were neither rebels nor 'thinkers' nor precursors of the Revolution." Even if this conclusion seems largely valid, the reader of today can barely overlook that *L'Art religieux du XIII^e siècle* is a product of the late nineteenth century and did not totally escape the modernism it struggled so emphatically to refute. Sentences such as "The cathedral was the conscience of the city... rich and poor enjoyed the same art" remain closer to the ideas of Hugo and Viollet-le-Duc than one seems to have realized until now. Mâle opposed the liberal fancies of the "freedom of the press" in thirteenth-century art with the Romantic myth of the cathedral as "the mighty hull", in which "the whole city could safely embark". It is a beautiful dream but it seems less inspired by Vincent of Beauvais than by Michelet. "Liberté" may have been exorcized, but "fraternité" and "égalité" remain present in Mâle's image of the medieval cathedral.

The classic text of 1898 here receives a welcome second English edition. However, one would have liked to read an introduction describing for the modern reader Mâle's achievement and his place in the history of scholarship and taste. Our present habit of putting past scholarly books on the market without comment as if they had been written yesterday, reveals a shocking loss of historical perspective and confuses students, who are exposed to floods of undigested information. The addition of some supplementary footnotes is of little help, merely degrading a masterpiece of historiography to an iconographic manual, which can be brought up to date by simply feeding in recent bibliography. Marthiel Mathews's translation is sensitive and echoes something of the poetic lightness of Mâle's elegant French.

ing of the church of San Salvatore; the Scuola di San Rocco; and Daniele Barbaro's edition of Vitruvius, as well as an introduction on the relation between the attitudes and values of the patricians of Venice and the buildings they commissioned, public and private. There are some fascinating discussions of unrealized projects, of "Unbuilt Venice".

The threads uniting this rather diverse collection of case-studies are the three themes of the subtitle — religion, science, architecture — and a fourth, at least equally central: politics. Of these four themes the least important is science. Daniele Barbaro's interests in perspective, clocks and botanical gardens are all mentioned, and Galileo makes an appearance from time to time, but the thrust of the book is not in this direction. Religion is rather more significant: Venice as Jerusalem, a sacred city; San Francesco della Vigna as a sacred space, where the angel appeared to St Mark, and so on. Tafari is particularly interested in unorthodoxy, and one of his most interesting points is that the architect Sebastiano Serlio dedicated the fifth book of his treatise on architecture to the princess Marguerite de Navarre, patron and defender of the unorthodox, quoting — ironically for an architect — St Paul's statement that "ye are the temple of the living God". Whether Serlio's evangelical opinions affected his architecture remains unclear.

The links between architecture and politics, on the other hand, are rather more obvious. Tafari notes the contrast between the relatively simple, modest houses built by leading patricians such as the doges Andrea Gritti and Leonardo Donà, and the magnificent public

works undertaken in the same period, notably Jacopo Sansovino's Library of St Mark's, which Palladio called "the most ornate building since antiquity". The contrast can be read as an expression of the values of civic humanism, the official ideology of the Venetian Republic (in the Republic of Genoa, on the other hand, private affluence and public squalor were all too manifest).

Venezia e il Rinascimento is a dense book, packed with information, not all of it of direct relevance to the general argument. Like a good historian, Tafari loves documents and what he calls "philology" (in the wide Italian sense of the term). He also has a strong urge to speculate, and a weakness for arguing that because Serlio, say, knows the scholar Achille Bocchi, and Bocchi knows the heretic Camillo Renato, the three men can be assumed to have shared "a common religious attitude". His book is more than a collection of essays, but less than a synthesis. It seems designed to provoke conflict rather than to encourage harmony. However, it is full of insights, iconographical and political, and it makes an important contribution to the integration of architecture into general history.

Recently published is *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance*, Volume One, 1985 (Villa I Tatti, The Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Via di Vincigliata 26, 50135 Florence, Italy. 312pp. 0393 5949), a journal "devoted to all those aspects of the Italian Renaissance that the Harvard Center itself aims to explore".

Artistic egos

David Carrier

ELLEN HANDLER SPITZ
Art and Psyche
188pp. Yale University Press. £18.95.
0 300 03372 9

Seeking to create a dialogue between mainstream American psychoanalysis and aesthetics, *Art and Psyche* investigates three models of interpretation. Pathography interprets the artwork in relation to the artist's childhood; alternatively, analysts focus on the artwork itself, and upon the relationship between that work and its audience. Freud's *Leonardo* is the classic model of pathography; other recent psychoanalytic accounts discuss what is internal to the work, its style; and the therapist-patient relation provides a model for the experience of art. This tripartite structure, Ellen Spitz argues, does "encompass the existing literature" and so provides "a scaffolding for further interdisciplinary refinement".

The most obvious trouble with her position is that its focus is both too broad and too narrow. In presenting the debate between Meyer Schapiro and Freud on Leonardo, Leo Steinberg's critique of Liebert's *Michelangelo*, Richard Wollheim versus Paul Ricoeur on the place of Freud's aesthetic in the development of psychoanalysis, and E. H. Gombrich and D. W. Winnicott on artworks and transitional objects, she both assumes prior knowledge of these texts and provides argumentation which does not go very deep. Perhaps because she is too close to her subject, Spitz includes many technical details without effectively motivating the discussion.

Though her account is technical, Spitz's claims are often elementary. Who doubts that Albert's and Mondrian's activity involved "functions of the ego" or that reacting to a murder in *Julius Caesar* is different from experiencing "a similar scene... on a street outside the theatre after the play"? The aesthetician will not find these claims novel. But when Spitz advances beyond such banalities, reveals a shocking loss of historical perspective and confuses students, who are exposed to floods of undigested information. The addition of some supplementary footnotes is of little help, merely degrading a masterpiece of historiography to an iconographic manual, which can be brought up to date by simply feeding in recent bibliography. Marthiel Mathews's translation is sensitive and echoes something of the poetic lightness of Mâle's elegant French.

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Reading the mind-readers

Dan Gunn

JEFFREY BERMAN
The Talking Cure: Literary representations of psychoanalysis
301pp. New York University Press. \$42.50.
0 81 97075 1
JANE GALLOP
Reading Lacan
196pp. Cornell University Press. \$21.95.
0 8014 1585 3

Psychoanalysis is a practice that spans national frontiers and whose history has been bound up with international movements; yet it remains at the same time deeply marked by national units and styles. To read these two books is to be reminded of this. Both are by Americans who are passionately committed to psychoanalysis and its relevance to reading; but while Jeffrey Berman writes from within the mainstream of American psychology, Jane Gallop writes under the influence of the French, with a view to promoting Lacan in America.

The Talking Cure is a long, thorough, at times slightly repetitive enquiry into how literature has represented psychoanalysis and psychoanalysis. It seeks to offer insight into "the fascinating relationship between the creative and therapeutic process, and the cross-fertilization of literature and psychoanalysis". And it is a curious — though in the analytic context perhaps unsurprising — paradox that it best achieves this when it faces up to the basic poverty of its chosen area: few "literary" writers, at least among those Berman considers, have written either sympathetically or illuminatingly about psychoanalysis.

What we find instead is a parade of stereotyped, wayward, megalomaniac analysts, and various forms of psychiatric and institutional brutality which seem to have little to do with the legacy of Freud. Or — when a writer does engage with psychoanalysis properly — a reticence or resistance which leaves the acquirer guessing. Such reticence seems to put the value of Berman's book in question. But it is precisely when he faces up to the questions posed by it that his book offers most insights into literature, and is at the same time most convincingly "psychoanalytic". When he skirts these questions he tends to make up for the feeble representation of psychoanalysis in fiction by a superabundance of his own, albeit superior, analytic interpretation. And this is dangerous. It leads him to some highly speculative psychoanalysis of fictional characters, some questionable interpretation of authors' biographical details, and some very debatable literary judgments — it can only be gratitude which makes him conclude that "Reading D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* is like discovering a lost Shakespeare play". Berman talks incessantly about transference; yet his own term of "transference", on the rare author who has the merit of at least taking psychoanalysis seriously, passes unanalysed. After a brief introductory consideration of Freud's case histories, Berman reminds the reader of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's wonderful and disturbing story, "The Yellow Wallpaper". He comes up, as he does throughout the book, with some fascinating evidence: here, on the history of Gilman's own illness and the nature of S. Weir Mitchell's "rest cure", which threatened to drive her permanently mad, and which partly inspired the story. The mechanisms and dangers of transference and counter-transference are discussed in relation to *Tender is the Night*; a long chapter is devoted to *The Cocktail Party*; and the letters of Sylvia Plath are minutely sifted for any comments on analysis and for what they might offer towards an understanding of *The Bell Jar*.

What repeatedly strikes the reader, however, despite Berman's thorough research, is how colloquially if not obviously writers have dealt with psychoanalysis. And where little material is available, as in the case of Eliot, Berman attempts to provide it.

The psychosexual implications (of Sylvia Plath's death in *The Cocktail Party*) are intriguing. On an oral level, the psychiatrist is merging with the poet in a mystical union, incorporating her nagging ego. On an anal level, he is seductively killing her off and casting her away. On a phallic level, he

with this or that detail; rather it is the accumulation of such interpretations that is problematic. Psychoanalysts are taught to be aware of the potential violence of interpretation; for their part, literary critics must be careful not to articulate and amplify the text to the extent of appropriating it. In either case it is the specificity and strangeness of the other (or object) which is threatened; the specificity and strangeness which characterize manifestations of the unconscious or, equally, the literary text and its allures.

Despite Berman's persuasive tone, his careful groundwork and ample documentation, fiction and reality, the author's biography and the limited facts of his or her characters' lives, do end up, if not confused, then all sounding very much of a piece. For Berman, the central problem of *The White Hotel* is whether the heroine's premonitory dreams and symptoms ultimately lend themselves to psychoanalysis or to mysticism. He concludes that her death indicates the limits of psychoanalysis, and that Thomas therefore ultimately embraces transcendentalism. The objection to this is not just that the limits of the psychoanalytic perspective in the novel are staked out well before this by the caricature of Freud we find there. It is that the undeclared but insistent desire of Thomas the storyteller goes completely unquestioned.

Psychoanalysis at such moments seems to colude with literary representations of itself. There is a violence in *The White Hotel* other than the explicit violence, and it inheres in the way the author maps out his heroine's "fate" as testament to his own control — a control magnified to omnipotence when her fate is yoked to that of the rewritten destiny of a whole people.

So it is not when Berman is trying to elaborate a text's half-hearted psychoanalytic episodes that his own brand of psychoanalysis seems appropriate. Rather, it is when he discusses the limits of fictive psychoanalysis (as in the chapters on Joanne Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* and on Philip Roth), or fiction's hostility to psychoanalysis (as in his interesting chapter on Nabokov), that Berman is able to illuminate the authors' silences rather than fill them with his own interpretations. His ideal analyst is in fact a very "empathic" figure. Indeed, the limits and scope of his approach are perhaps best indicated by his own view of what such a figure can achieve: "Progress in psychotherapy is measured... by the agonizingly slow development of ego strengths."

Any definition Jane Gallop, a follower of Lacan, might give of analysis would be radically different, and would almost certainly include mention of the unconscious (or "the discourse

of the other"). She takes six essays from Lacan's *Écrits* and submits them to a close, often line-by-line reading. And reading is the crucial term in her book's title. Gallop is open about her orientation: she is a teacher of humanities, with French as a second language, little or no clinical experience, limited grasp of Lacan, and a disinclination to take his scientific side too seriously. This welcome declaration of modesty goes along with an equally welcome assertion of the right to pick up Lacan and read; subsequently, to write about this reading (which Gallop also takes to be a feminist one). She "would thus transfer Lacan from the psychoanalytic scene to the scene of reading" — "transfer" here retains something of its psychoanalytic connotation. Unlike Berman, Gallop is keenly aware of her own "transference" on to a chosen text.

Difficulty is something all readers of Lacan will have experienced, and Gallop confronts this without embarrassment. In a chapter devoted to the "Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*" she shows why Americans in particular have had difficulty with Lacan, who is famous for his virulent anti-Americanism. She locates such two-way hostility in the realm of the "imaginary", and proposes to remove the debate into the "symbolic": this, she says, is the pur-

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pose of psychoanalysis. Her reading of Lacan's essay shows it as a "parable of psychoanalysis" in which the true analyst-figure in Poe's tale is not Dupin (as is often supposed) but the narrator. Gallop may over-simplify the category of the "imaginary" and put more faith in the "symbolic" than is warranted; but her re-reading is none the less intriguing and convincing.

The problem of the way Lacan's work is received remains central to Gallop, and in her chapter on "The Mirror Stage" she seeks to show how "the effect of Lacan's text on his students is analogous to the effect of the mirror on the infant". What is crucial for her in the mirror stage is the establishing of chronology: the way in which an infant both "anticipates" and "retroacts" its own history; but also the way in which Lacan's pupils see his later formulations in his early "Mirror Stage" essay, and the way in which the original of this essay, though often referred to, is in fact untraceable.

Gallop is always ingenious, particularly so in her discussions of "The Freudian Thing" and of "The Subversion of the Subject". But it is in her chapters on feminine sexuality in relation to the essays "The Agency of the Letter" and "The Signification of the Phallus" that her ingenuity seems most powerfully allied to com-

mitment. Through a series of associations on Lacan's ideas of metaphor and metonymy, she shows how metonymy seems to have been associated in Lacan with the feminine and consequently to have been undervalued; she then shows how rivalry between metaphor and metonymy is itself already part of a "phallogocentric interpretive tradition". She goes on to discuss the ambivalence in Lacan's relation to women, which she tracks down to the level of his use of ambiguous phrases which may be lost in translation. She does not seek to resolve this ambivalence; nor should we require her to. Rather she shows how deep it runs.

Also included in *Reading Lacan* are Gallop's accounts of her book's genesis, of its development (through her own brief affair with analysis) and even of a dream she had upon concluding it. At its strongest, Gallop's personal approach gives a sense of involvement in her reading and communicates a sense of the work which is drawing her on. Elsewhere, however, her reading blurs into a "reading" of her own person—or personality. The line dividing these two readings is fine but vital.

Through her modest declaration of her limited qualifications, Gallop leads us to expect a direct engagement with Lacan. Yet repeated-

ly her chapters start and are given momentum by invoking secondary readers or translators (of very varied competence and seriousness): Alan Sheridan, François George, Catherine Clément, Anthony Wilden, Jacques Derrida *et al.* Among the proliferation of names, the name Lacan threatens at times almost to disappear. Add to this Gallop's desire to show how the reception of Lacan's texts reflects his ideas, and her policy of using Mehlman to read Mehlman, Lacan Lacan (and Derrida to some extent to read them all), and going through her book can feel like walking through an academic hall of mirrors. In the conclusion to her chapter on "The Mirror Stage" she indeed says: "As I thus recognize my chapter as a mirror image of itself, I am jubilant." This reader is rather less so; perhaps even rather excluded by such mirroring, such narcissism.

Another even more serious worry originates in her introductory avowal of her limitations. For only pages later these limitations are turned—almost magically—into their opposite. Lacan, she decides, is all about style; and no one is better equipped to understand style than a "professional reader" of literature. Lacan, it is true, was fond of Buffon's maxim "le style est l'homme même"; but it is a big step from this to

the claim that Lacan can best be understood by literary critics attending to the style of his written output (which in any case constituted only a tiny part of his work, most of which was transmitted orally, and was heavily influenced by his editor and son-in-law, Jacques-Alain Miller).

Gallop's Lacan is a literary and a limited creature, particularly when, as she admits, she resists "touching the beautiful, crazy, violent portions of the text". This does not in itself invalidate her picture of him—except to the extent that she implies that her picture is not in fact a limited one. For Lacan was also a psychiatrist, a major clinician, head of a school, formulator of certain scientific propositions which may indeed be "read", but may also be debated, challenged and developed. These propositions are often surprisingly simple in themselves, even if the commentary upon them is notoriously complex and difficult. His theories are almost invariably better presented and understood by referring back to concepts of Freud's and they have serious clinical implications. The relation of psychoanalysis to reading, as Gallop and Mehlman in their very different ways and styles both testify, is indeed a complex and a crucial one.

hated. There are such emotions, but they are emotionally close to their more perverse variants, and are not identified by standard English names. One can wallow irrationally in what is accurately described as remorse; what is accurately described as regret can be too trivial an emotion for such an occasion; guilt can then be a completely inappropriate emotion.

Taylor's project requires her to work out the contrasts between guilt, regret, and remorse, and at the same time indicate what about these emotions is morally relevant, and what "healthy" or "redeeming". It is not at all clear that these two projects are the same: an elaboration of the contrasts between the ordinary concepts as expressed in the ordinary words may miss some of the morally and psychologically most important features of our emotions. I would be surprised if this were not so, for our ordinary vocabulary here is surely in part an expression of our culture's ideas about character, blame, retribution, and atonement, and these ideas are at the moment very much in transition. Taylor's reluctance to go too far from the contrasts embedded in the meanings of a few English words is reflected in her somewhat cursory treatment of Bernard Williams's examples of situations where something like remorse seems to be required. The challenge the examples present is that of describing the emotion that a responsible person would feel without describing it as a pointless self-indulgence.

These are wishes that Taylor had said more about some things, rather than objections to what she does say. We do need a map of the emotions of self-assessment, just because the line between the redeeming and the self-indulgent emotions is so hard to draw. And we do need to work out the ways in which emotions can be perverse, self-indulgent, healthily redeeming, or part of what any person of integrity would feel. These are problems that others should take up, following where Taylor has begun. For if we understood better the role that self-respect and the emotions of self-assessment play in our lives we could go on to tackle important practical and theoretical tasks. One such practical task is that of describing the ways in which it is and is not appropriate to react to various difficult situations. And one such theoretical task is that of answering the most basic question about the morally important emotions: why do we need them?

Anna Freud has made a selection of her father Sigmund Freud's writings, *The Essentials of Psychoanalysis* (597pp. Chatto and Windus, £20. 0 7012 0720 5), for the International Psychoanalytical Library. Clifford York states in his foreword that, hitherto, requests for a recommendation of the best introduction to Freud's work have defied an easy answer. This book claims to include "the essential, irreducible elements of psychoanalysis".

Re-arming the intelligence

Francis Steegmüller

MARCEL PROUST
Correspondence: Tome XIII, 1914
Edited by Philip Kolb
Mpp. Paris: Plon. 160fr.
12500 1198 5
Mesures and Regrets
Translated by Louise Varese
22pp. Peter Owen. £11.95.
02060531

As this volume opens, in January 1914, Marcel Proust is forty-two years old. His asthma and his habits of work confine him to the bedroom where constant fumigation is his excuse for not receiving visitors. Occasionally he ventures out into what was then "the purer air of evening". Editorial matters are his immediate concern.

The reviews of *Swann*, published by Grasset the previous November, are still coming in. In the *Nouvelle Revue Française* for January 1 appear the far from flattering assessments by Henri Ghéon, eliciting Proust's celebrated letters in reply: a prelude to the equally famous exchanges with Gide, the *NRF's* official flatterer, and the eventual appearance, in the June and July numbers of the magazine, of two sections from the new volume in preparation, *James Fils en fleur*. (All this forms, as it were, a continuous narrative, interrupted by other matters.) Proust's reputation is greatly enlarged. *Swann* sells 3,600 copies in the first year. Especially to Grasset, and to Jacques Rivière at the *NRF*, Proust sends the celebrated, interminable, all but illegible alterations of text. Grasset has to assign a special assistant to decipher them.

A womb with a view

Robin Buss

FRANÇOIS WEYERGANS
La Vie d'un bébé
Mpp. Paris: Gallimard. 70fr.
9700478 5

François Weyergans is not the first novelist to begin the story of his central character nine months before the moment when life, for the purpose of fiction, is commonly supposed to begin, but it is exceptional, for a novel to end with the birth of its narrator. *La Vie d'un bébé* opens a previously unexplored field for the novel of apprenticeship.

It is one which psychologists have long considered worthy of attention. The novelist, though, faces one or two problems when he takes this new sub-genre of "foetal autobiography". The environment is uniform and uneventful, the cast of characters limited. Weyergans says that twins have no need to communicate, since they supply each

Equally prominent in this volume is the fine review of *Swann* by the painter Jacques Émile Blanche, in which Proust collaborates: it is published in the *Écho de Paris* on April 15, and Proust pays several newspapers (300 francs to *Le Figaro*) to print further "echoes" of its most laudatory passages.

So much for business. 1914 is the year of the drowning of the beloved chauffeur, Alfred Agostinelli, following the crash of his plane (a gift from Proust) in the sea off Antibes; the single letter from Proust to Agostinelli in this volume is written on May 30, the very day of the tragedy. 1914 is the year, also, of the murder, on March 16, of Proust's friend Gaston Calmette, editor of *Le Figaro*, by Mme Cail-laux, wife of a cabinet minister whom Calmette had attacked in print. On July 30 comes her astonishing acquittal: Proust is among those who send messages of sympathy to Calmette's family.

And 1914 is—the atrocious year. For years before the murder at Sarajevo there had been the heightening of international tension, exchanges of provocation, and refutations of conciliation, of a kind all too familiar to readers in the 1980s. Proust's brother, Dr Robert Proust, is called up on August 2: Proust accompanies him to the Gare de l'Est. Soon from the front comes the news that a German bomb has exploded in the operating room where the doctor is working: he is miraculously unhurt, and is "cité à l'ordre du jour, pas pour cela, mais pour tant d'autres choses courageuses qu'il ne cesse de faire". "Les obus tombaient sur la table d'opération": nothing is said of the patient.

Many letters go to the composer Reynaldo Hahn in the army, begging him to desist from seeking transfer from his safe post in Albi to

that of bicycle messenger at the front. Proust, who in youth had enjoyed his year of military service, is now hopelessly asthmatic; nevertheless fears conscription: and all his doctors are called on for certification of his unfitness. To Lionel Hauser he writes repeatedly about his investments, which he himself has handled desolatorily and which are of course affected by events. Paris is bombarded—an experience Proust will characterize in a revelatory passage of his novel as "Pompéi par fragments, chaque soir." For a time, accompanied by the faithful Céleste Albaret and a Swedish valet, he seeks refuge at the Grand Hôtel in Cabourg. Most of the building is a military hospital; he remains there five or six weeks, distributing gifts to the wounded before leaving. Lists of casualties "au champs d'honneur" fill the newspaper columns; as one may imagine, Proust's letters of condolence are sublime.

But, as always, even in this wartime volume, it is the passages on art and society that particularly enthral. Writing to André Chaumet, apparently referring to reviewers who have criticized *Swann* for "having no plan", he wonders: supposing *L'Éducation sentimentale* were to appear today—would it be found to have a "plan"? To Émile Straus, about the sordid behaviour of Agostinelli's relatives, eager to get their hands on the money he was carrying when he drowned: "Ces choses-là, si affreuses qu'elles soient, arrivent journellement chez les La Rochefoucauld ou les Montmorency dès qu'une question d'intérêt se présente." Again to Émile Straus, a curious remark: "Il est vrai que la culture n'est guère plus nécessaire que suffisante à l'éclosion du talent." Best of all, perhaps, to Daniel Halévy about a war story Halévy had written and published in the *Journal des Débats* for November 17:

[La lundi soir novembre 1914]

Cher ami

Ces quelques mots pour te dire que c'est en pleurant que j'ai lu *les Trois Croix*. En ce temps où il y a tant de subtils dans les faits, et si peu dans les paroles et les écrits, où chacun annonce que la

Guerre a transformé les esprits, mais l'annonce dans un style qui montre trop qu'elle n'a rien transformé du tout, où les mêmes sottises, les mêmes banalités reviennent, soit pres encore, soit semblant telles par leur confrontation aux grandes choses qu'elles s'imaginent exprimer, en ce temps où on ne peut lire un journal sans dégoût, et où peut-être pas une ligne décente n'a encore été écrite sur la guerre, je crois que les *Trois Croix* sont le premier morceau de la littérature guerrière (ne te frotte pas du mot littérature qui au sens où je le prends et où tu l'entends j'espère est fort noble) qu'il m'ait été donné de lire. Que des choses j'aurais à te dire à un moment où jamais le désarmement des intelligences n'a été si facile.

Ton bien ému et admiratif

Marcel Proust

Most of Halévy's article, or story, is given to us in a footnote on page 332. It is brief and intense. Philip Kolb does well to reprint it. But then Kolb does everything well here. In the amplitude, tone, and interest of its notes, indeed in its entire presentation, this volume is masterly—as are all its predecessors. What has developed is the quality of the letters themselves. Maturity, artistic growth, the nurture of his own genius, the presence of personal tragedy and apocalyptic public events, all combine to wring from Proust an authenticity only intermittently present in the earlier correspondence.

Pleasures and Regrets, a collection of Proust's early tales and sketches was entitled *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* when it was published, with a preface by Anatole France, in Paris in 1896. (Proust was twenty-five.) Louise Varese's translation, with its altered title, first appeared in 1949; the present edition is a reprinting of an American reprint published by the Ecco Press in New York last year. D. J. Enright has added an informative preface (not present in the American reprint), which sympathetically emphasizes the book's chief interest today: its early sounding, here and there, of themes grandly treated in *Remembrance*. These tales often possess an immature, very fin-de-siècle charm, and at times hint at the power to come.

Mapping for moral relevance

Adam Morton

GABRIELE TAYLOR
Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of self-assessment
144pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £17.50.
019 824620 X

Suppose that one's attitude to oneself was entirely negative, allowing room for neither pride nor self-respect. Could one then function as a person, valuing and judging and making plans about one's own and other people's future? If it seems that the answer might be yes, or that it depends on unknown quirks of human psychology, consider a more extreme example. Suppose that one's attitude to oneself was entirely neutral, allowing neither pride, self-respect, shame, guilt, nor even embarrassment. Could one still function as a person?

These are important questions. For one idea that occurs to anyone who thinks about morality is that a need for something like self-respect is an essential part of what it is to be a person, and that without it we would be inconceivably different, and probably would not function in any effective way at all. So the evident need people have to judge and evaluate and set standards of action and character might arise not just from the need to coordinate our actions and prevent us from harming one another, but also, and more deeply, from what is required for a creature to function as a person, with a workable conception of itself.

To state these questions in a way that gave any chance of finding intelligent answers to them, one would first have to clear the ground by answering some others. And these are the questions Gabriele Taylor addresses herself to. They are, roughly: what emotions are relevant

to having a functioning conception of oneself? Which of these are culturally parochial and which (or, which features of them) universal? What role do the ideas of self and others play in these emotions? What emotions and what beliefs are required for self-respect? Which emotions are inherently connected with morality?

Her answers, just as roughly, are as follows. There is a class of emotions of self-evaluation, of which the most important members are pride, remorse, shame and guilt, which are essentially tied both to attitudes of self-respect and self-esteem and to the central moral attribute of integrity. Integrity consists in putting the moral worth of one's motives and actions at the centre of one's conception of oneself, and is thus essential if praise or blame is to affect the agent deeply. Pride and shame are the most parochial and the least moral of these emotions, in that they are associated with a less specifically moral range of beliefs and are less intimately connected with one's conception of oneself. Their connections are really with self-esteem rather than self-respect. Someone could, for example, feel pride or shame at having eaten five pounds of chocolates. On the other hand shame's connections with self-esteem link it indirectly with integrity and self-respect, for the sense of shame threatens one's image of what one is, as well as one's evaluation of one's actions. Guilt, on the other hand, is more specifically moral, in that it is associated with beliefs about the relations between one's actions and various norms; but guilt has fewer close connections with self-respect, in that its focus is on the value of one's actions rather than on one's value as a person. Remorse, however, is intrinsically directed at the moral qualities of one's actions, in particular those which affect others.

Taylor is to some extent playing favourites among the emotions here. Some of them acquire a more definite rationale than others, which makes them emerge as more rational and more likely to be part of the equipment of the morally adequate person. The favoured emotions receive another and very interesting kind of emphasis too. Taylor analyses the healing capacities of guilt, shame, and remorse, the parts they can play in enabling someone to come to terms with past actions they no longer approve of, and concludes that shame is the least and remorse the most helpful for this purpose.

This favouritism helps to explain and excuse some arbitrariness in Taylor's descriptions of the various emotions. It is easy, for example, to object that the way she draws the contrast between guilt and remorse does not exactly fit one's own use of the words, or that many people use the terms "self-respect" and "self-esteem" interchangeably. But such objections are beside the point. For Taylor's main aim is to show how to draw certain contrasts between the emotions we ascribe to ourselves—and, for that matter, between the emotions we are cap-

able of having. And these contrasts are important because through them we can describe differences in the ways different emotions fit into our lives.

To take Taylor's project in these terms, as an exercise in charting our actual and possible emotions rather than in describing our emotional vocabulary, is not to make it immune to objection. The main aim of her analysis must be to produce a map of a connected range of emotions. And the map that Taylor produces—in the course of the whole book, never summarized or put together in one place—seems defective in some respects. For one thing, she discusses only one emotion of positive self-evaluation, pride, as against the four emotions of negative self-evaluation. And pride emerges as a relatively primitive and not essentially moral business, something a person could lack without danger to their integrity.

This leads to a curious asymmetry in her picture of the person of integrity: such a person is susceptible to remorse, guilt, and regret on the side of self-hatred, and on the side of self-love has only the more cerebral attitude, hardly an emotion, of self-respect. It seems a grey and austere condition: why should anyone aspire to it? But surely what is going on here is that Taylor has succumbed to something parochial in our present attitudes. We are wary of smugness, pomposity, and spiritual pride, and, in our care not to rely on these, have run out of names for the authentic satisfactions of living according to one's principles. And perhaps we have also run out of ways into those satisfactions.

Another omission in Taylor's map involves the contrasts between shame, guilt, regret and remorse. The contrast between shame and guilt is drawn in some detail, and is, I think, meant in part to be one between shame and the other three. The contrasts between guilt, remorse, and regret, on the other hand, are only sketched, and are not easy to bring into focus. In fact, at one point Taylor remarks that remorse is not really an emotion of self-assessment at all because "in feeling remorse a person's thoughts are not primarily upon himself . . . He is not seen by some [imagined] audience or judged by some authority." And yet remorse is earlier described as an "eminently healthy and essentially moral emotion, being concerned with the effects of the agent's actions on others in a way that draws him away from self-preoccupation and self-indulgence. She seems to be excluding from her project the emotion which, according to her theory, she ought to be paying most attention to.

Taylor needs, in her characterization of integrity, to be able to describe emotions which have two different sorts of characteristic. On the one hand they must be deep and serious and capable of doing justice to the force of the aversion one can have for one's past actions. On the other hand the core of such an emotion must not be self-indulgence or pointless self-

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Arguing for the actor

John Hope Mason

ANGELICA GOODDEN

Acto and Persuasion: Dramatic performance in eighteenth-century France
200pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £20.
019815836 X

Discussing painting, Plutarch wrote that "it is quite possible for us to take pleasure in the work and at the same time look down on the workman". In the early Renaissance this attitude was one classical inheritance which the Italian humanists were concerned to alter, rather than revive. To do so they employed the language of rhetoric. By stressing the intellectual attributes of the painter, and the similarity of his procedures to those of the orator, a writer like Alberti aimed to raise the status of the artist.

In similar fashion, suggests Angelica Goodden, arguments based on rhetoric were used in eighteenth-century France to enhance the status of the actor. The classical rhetoricians had recognized the importance of gesture and expression and one aspect of rhetorical technique, known as *actio*, was devoted to this

"bodily eloquence". *Actio* was obviously employed by the actor as much as the orator and could therefore provide respectability to a profession that was subject to both official and general disapproval. The result was that fifty years after Voltaire's famous attack on French contempt for actors, an academy to teach acting opened in Paris.

In describing the changing attitudes to acting Goodden covers a rich range of material. The empiricists' concern with how each sense leads to knowledge gave special emphasis to sight and brought a new dimension to an old argument about the value of the witnessed (as opposed to reported) event. The success of the Italian actors, and the rivalry between the unofficial theatres at Saint-Germain and the Comédie-Française, led to the development of a particularly physical kind of acting. Pantomime and pantomime ballets became very popular, and in the hands of Noverre dance itself underwent a major reform. In addition, analogies were drawn between the depiction of emotions by painters and the performance of actors. Lebrun's classification of expression and gesture could be applied to the stage, and Marmontel's article on acting for the *Encyclopédie* suggested paintings to serve as models for actors.

The writer who features most frequently in this survey is Diderot. The theoretical essays he attached to the text of his two plays were as influential during his own lifetime as anything else he published, and they dealt with theatre in a typically diverse way. His early *Lettre sur les sons et muets* contains an account of how theatre can speak to the deaf, precisely through "bodily eloquence", and the protagonist of *Le Neveu de Rameau* is, among many other things, a brilliant mimic. Moreover, in his *Paradoxe sur le comédien* Diderot wrote one of the classic accounts of how actors operate.

In considering the *Paradoxe*, however, we come up against the difficulties which this study faces. Its principal theme of the actor as someone who is detached from the emotions he portrays owed much, according to Diderot, to the example of the actress Clairon. Yet she herself insisted that acting could not be taught. This was because it was not susceptible to the kind of "intellectual mastery" which Goodden attributes to the theory of the *Paradoxe*. In other words, the way acting is experienced by the actor is different from the way it is described by the writer, and the comments of the two cannot be treated alike. The evidence of a Clairon must be assessed differently from that of a Marmontel. And as for the protean Diderot, his observations on acting stemmed as much from his perception of the writer as a kind of impersonator as they did from his observations of, or conversations with, actors.

The argument of the *Paradoxe* could be seen as consistent with the central thesis of this book, allying acting with rhetoric. But there are a number of problems with this thesis. In

the first place, the analogy with the Renaissance is unsatisfactory. Certainly in the early Quattrocento the defence of painting, like the defence of poetry, was conducted in terms of rhetoric. But later in the century other terms were used, and the most influential defence of all became that provided by the Christian neo-Platonism of Ficino, with its image of God as an artist. Furthermore, the low status of painting had been due to the fact that as manual work it was classified as a mechanical art; the low status of acting, on the other hand, was due to the fact that it was considered either immoral or liable to deprave others. At the very least the actor was taken to be insincere. Now this was a problem which rhetoric was ill-equipped to solve since it was open to the same charge. Cicero's remark that oratorical skills must be accompanied by virtue (or they would be "weapons in the hands of a madman") was well-known, and Quintilian's attempt to counter the charge was notably unconvincing. Writers on preaching, as Goodden's examples indicate, were concerned that orators using *actio* should not become like actors.

Finally, the period when acting began to win esteem in France was also the period when rhetoric began to lose its previous status. In place of rules and the imitation of past models there was a new concern for natural, individual expression; the inner experience became more important than external display. Goodden includes an instance of this in some comments on the inadequacy of painting made by Merlet at the end of the century. This example, in fact, could be taken as typical of her book as a whole. For while its central thesis is unassailable it provides interesting material on a number of fascinating subjects.

Culture of a tattooed lady

John Osborne

PETER JELAVICH

Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, playwriting, and performance, 1890-1914
403pp. Harvard University Press. £23.50.
0674 588355

The epithet "theatrical" in the title of Peter Jelavich's book refers both to the style of that modernism which emerged in the Bavarian capital during the quarter-century before the First World War, and to the subject of his investigation. *Munich and Theatrical Modernism* is a work of cultural history, empirical rather than theoretical in its approach, which deals with theatre in all its aspects. The range of material included is, in fact, very wide, and its heterogeneity is such that the author sometimes has to strain rather in order to hold his argument together.

Jelavich discusses a number of dramatic texts, most extensively the dramas of Wedekind (especially *Spring Awakening*) and Panizza's *Council of Love*; he is very much stronger on biography and documentation than analysis and criticism, but this is almost inevitable when discussing a play like Panizza's. He deals with theatre architecture, including the two important theatres designed by Max Littmann, the Munich *Schauspielhaus* (1901) and the *Kaisertheater* (1908), both of which were organized so as to foster the more intimate relationship between audience and stage required by the new type of drama being produced. He deals with aspects of stage-design, *mise-en-scène*, theatre administration, socio-political pressures, and the composition of theatre audiences; and he writes in some detail about the development of cabaret in Munich, covering the full spectrum from the serious and committed satire of the literary *avant-garde*, to the glib, loose cabaret of Josef Valke.

One of the assumptions which provide the point of departure for Jelavich's argument, that "by the last half of the nineteenth century German theatre was dominated by the spoken word" is seriously over-stated: the culture of Imperial Germany was predominantly visual and theatrical in very much the sense in which the term is used by Jelavich, although, of course, the values and the high differed from those of the Munich *avant-garde*, even its

narrative literature and lyric poetry displayed pronounced theatrical qualities, and its theatre was no less decorative or spectacular than that of Victorian England. This does not, however, affect the question argument, that the period in question saw a revitalization and diversification of theatrical forms and style, and that Munich was a particularly productive centre for experimentation in the "gestural" theatre favoured by modernism.

The reasons for this, Jelavich argues, are to be found in the paradoxical character of Munich culture, as exemplified in the *Monachia*-figure, the tattooed lady in Toller's play, *Hinkemann*, who embodies Munich's "neo-classical 'front' and its modernist 'behind' [sic]". On the one hand, the city provided a congenial atmosphere thanks to its rich visual and theatrical tradition; its theatre was the largest in Europe, with seats for 2,600 of the city's population of 40,000; in and around it there were (and still are) great galleries and art collections, rococo churches and royal palaces; there was the memory of Richard Wagner's presence in the city and, at the popular end of the scale, the secular and religious customs of the Bavarian peasantry; there was also a strong separatist tradition which, after 1870, enabled Munich to acquire something of the character of a centre of alternative culture, compared with the official culture of the imperial (and Prussian) capital, Berlin. On the other hand, as Jelavich shows in detail, there was a strong tradition of repression and intolerance; which had a firmly populist base. It was very much alive in the period under discussion, providing the element of resistance which stimulated the satirical energy of the *avant-garde*, but successfully and viciously inhibited its expression. The opposition to modernist culture which came particularly from the Centre Party, and which reached its climax in the 50,000-strong Munich Men's League for Combating Public Immorality, severely limited the impact of Wedekind's work during his lifetime, and contributed to the breakdown of Panizza and Lautensack.

In this respect the contradictions and tensions of early modernism in Munich, and the extreme results they produced, can be seen to anticipate post-war developments in the Weimar Republic. Not the least of Jelavich's achievements is that he has directed our attention to a rather more neglected period of German cultural history.

Dreams of omniscience

Edward Said

ANDREW MARTIN

The Knowledge of Ignorance: From Genesis to Jules Verne
250pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
0521 265588

This is an audacious book. Andrew Martin's subject is the hidden relationship (bordering on equivalence) of knowledge and ignorance, or "omniscience and nescience" as he sometimes calls them. His proposition is a compelling one - that whenever those opposites are joined at closely, the paradoxes and contradictions multiply to such an extent as to make the opposition, ordinarily thought of as total, unstable. In the book of Genesis, for example, the very existence of a text telling of the virtues of ignorance in a knowledgeable way undermines its author's claims to present an all-knowing God who masterminds a "doomed experiment with human nescience". God's prohibition against Adam and Eve partaking of the fruits of knowledge comes from "the deity's need to realize the logical possibility ... of ignorance", but once humans acquire some knowledge they develop a permanent sense for it. Thereafter all sorts of inconsistencies develop, each of them reinforcing the problem of every book which, "though it proposes to heal the rift between the divine and the human, can only succeed in preserving or segmenting the distance between them. Ethically, all writing implies failure because it perpetuates the condition of sinfulness."

Martin's readings proceed eccentrically to reveal patterns of this "anepistemological" variety in the works of Nicholas of Cusa, Erasmus, Rousseau, Napoleon, Chateaubriand and Jules Verne. His prose is often cluttered with neologisms, barbarisms, jargon and pedantic war-puffs (for example, *topophile* and *apophobie*) and he is not immune to an excessive rhetorical use of the very paradoxes his book describes. Occasionally his word-play goes out of hand, perhaps causing some readers to give up on him entirely. Relentlessly driven, Martin's mode of criticism makes few concessions to simple or step-by-step argument, to beginnings and ends in the conventional sense, to the definitions and "points" of expository prose. He describes what he does as *bricolage*, an inadequate euphemism for the sheer plod of such sentences as: "The diverse texts considered herein share with the distant coordinates of a graph constructed from limited data the susceptibility to inclusion in alternative patterns spanning the conspicuous gap between them."

Yet he is on to something very suggestive and interesting. Although his book is organized chronologically, it is actually a brilliant critical demonstration of the impossibility of a history, of fact, of "truth". By virtue of its intractably extreme resistance to common sense - given Martin's belief that knowledge and ignorance are not poles apart but always constitutively involved in each other - his essay allures the common terrain they struggle over to emerge in various literary texts. In fact Martin seems to be saying that meaning is unstable and equivocal because our notions of knowledge and ignorance are fairly impossible, except as imaginative constructs. Once they are written about, examined, and otherwise negotiated with, you will get peculiar notions like Orient and Occident, genesis and renaissance, beginning and ending, science and literature, constructions that settle very little but let a great deal go on between them. His most acute pages deal with Hugo and Melville, as writers on the Orient and, in considerably more detail, with Jules Verne's *Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingt jours*. In the former case he argues that the consciousness of the Orient is a "Hugolian polarity". Out of such polarities, Verne's exotic machine develops a system of "intercontinental travel" with its "endless mobility of bilateral images" that results in "a kind of syncretism, blending the sublime and the grotesque, the Napoleonic imperialism of the Orient with the ideas about the Orient of the Occident, and he does an astonishing job of it on the question of civilisation."

repertoire of power and knowledge; whereas at first the ignorant Arabs were subject to Napoleon's quasi-omniscience, they and their Orient stand revealed as

not distinct from Europe but rather a part of its ancestry, the back side, its concealed rather embarrassing verso. Thus the civilizing mission finally exchanges the missionary approach to the East for an advance on the rear of Europe. The West is already Orientalized; the explicit substitution of the practice of Orientalization for the principle of Europeanization blows away the tissue of epistemological legitimacy enveloping the Orientalist exercise.

Using critical procedures reminiscent of those of Gaston Bachelard, Martin's chapter on Jules Verne is remarkably resourceful in its exploration of the obsessively culinary imagination at work in Verne's science fiction. Digestion, assimilation, cooking, collecting, codifying - all these are parts of the gigantic integral Vernean *repas*, which seeks nourishment equally at the centre of the earth or the bottom of the ocean. Martin's use of Verne is meant to exaggerate the equivocal or, to say the least, suspicious alliance of late nineteenth-century "totalizing projects" with "science". Like Verne's, "the various totalizing projects of the nineteenth century are gestures of nostalgia and conservatism; they mount a desperate defence of a fortress already in ruins [grand scheme had in fact been divided up into much smaller fields of specialization]; the book as a unitary, systematic framework for the containment of information, equipped with a natural or necessary language for its expression". Martin's most typical, most reborative and intransigent, most self-reflecting comment occurs as he sums up Verne: "The dream of omniscience coupled to the practice of omnivore; and, reflected in the mirror of negation, involuntary abstinence haunted by the nightmare of nescience; such are the co-

ordinates of Jules Verne's onerous and chiasmic career."

As descriptions of Verne, "oneiric and chiasmic" are symptomatic words, which Martin does a great deal to explicate credibly. But they are also words symptomatic of his own mode of criticism. It would be manifestly unfair to load his book with the crisis-in-criticism syndrome, given, first, that by now everyone is fairly tired of the subject and, second, that his own quite considerable talents offer the reader many local pleasures and profits. A gifted interpreter, Martin is also learned, precise and wonderfully sensitive to the divagations as well as the inherent craziness of the authors he has rightly chosen to highlight. Looked at more closely, however, his book shows that there is in it a sort of congruence between Martin's own critical philosophy and the rather messy situation he has decided to discuss.

On one level Martin is a deconstructionist. Indeed his pages on Genesis are Derrida read back into the Scriptures; later, his scrutiny of "Renaissance" and "Orientalism" carries much the same effort forward in time. His search for instabilities, shifts, collapses of meaning pay off time and again: all verbal undertakings, he affirms, are indeed undermined by the sheer lurch of words, "normally" discrete and clear-cut, towards their opposites. You think you say one thing, but in actuality are saying half-a-dozen things, things that reverse, travesty and completely subvert your intentions.

"Empson", one is likely to mutter. No, it isn't Empson. Martin's work has an openly metaphysical side to it, whereby all statements, all histories, presumably all realities, are at best approximative; they are never "the thing" itself, but some (often caricatural) version of the thing. This is a fair distance from the underlying ideology of clear statement that supported both Empson and Richards. For Martin's criticism expresses, as forcefully and

The referential genie

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"What will not be found in these essays", Jerome J. McGann tells us in his combative and moderately theoretical introduction to them, "is the assumption, so common in text-centered studies of every type, that literary works are self-enclosed verbal constructs, or looped intertextual fields of autonomous signifiers and signifieds". Where historical criticism was once pushed to the periphery of literary studies because of its inability to assimilate the view "that language structures (including, perforce, literary works) are modeling rather than mirroring forms", our need now, if we are to find a way out of the wilderness into which text-centered studies have led us, is to recover and to re-theorize "the idea of referentiality which underlies the thought of the great historical critics of the recent past". "The historical particularity of a poem by Wordsworth or a novel by Austen" (meaning the information and ideas which these authors assumed to be the natural property of their readers) "have to be clearly specified in the act of criticism, if that act is to proceed dialectically, if that act is not simply to project upon 'the work' its own conceptual interests." We need such scholarship also, rather than being able simply to go ahead and "read" our texts, because "scholarship - the sociological act by which criticism preserves and reconstitutes the past for immediate use - is the ground of every form of critical self-consciousness."

The essays in *Historical Studies and Literary Criticism* are not mainly theoretical, but they all show a state-of-the-art awareness of the renewed significance of sociohistorical concerns. Marilyn Butler, in a piece called "Against Tradition: The case for a particular 'historical method'", in fact even comes near to laying bare the major theoretical issue which lies behind this book's overt preoccupations. Reviewing the recent state of English studies, she rightly concludes that "the po-

etist case against historical criticism looks very vulnerable" - but then turns to her main target, which is "the belief that there is something readily knowable called 'tradition', to which we can attribute explanatory power", and has some fun at the expense of what even she herself recognizes to be pseudo-traditions (Scottish sporrans, Welsh Archdruids, etc) which have been cooked up for someone or other's narrowly doctrinaire purposes. She therefore leaves out from her argument any more serious notion of tradition (compare Eliot's, for example) as whatever seems literarily alive to us from the cultural standpoint we currently occupy. Butler makes sceptical noises about the idea of the eighteenth century as "mechanistic" (or of English poetry in it as "a frail rope bridge, the slender oeuvre of William Collins and Christopher Smart"), seeing this as Romantic tradition-mongering, but seems unwilling to take seriously the question of whether literary history might by now be thought to have shown the Romantics to have been right.

That some traditions have been shallow or phony, or that we happen to dislike them, is not an argument for rejecting the concept of tradition altogether in the name of - what else is there? - academic compendiousness. If we dislike a tradition, we must get in there and argue for a better one, which is what Joseph Bédier brilliantly did in his re-writing of the history of the medieval French *fabliaux* and *legendes épiques*. Those who knew nothing of Bédier will find Hans Aarsleff's essay "Scholarship and Ideology" an entertaining introduction to him - as well as to a vigorous and refreshing concept of literary truth. Bédier committed himself to the cultural point at which he found himself, defined a tradition, and recognized that his own view was itself an ideology which would pass away. In a companion essay to Aarsleff's ("Ideology and Scholarship"), on the other hand, Terry Eagleton sees the very existence of "literary discourse", and of literature itself, as a "repeated, demarcated body of privileged writing", as an ideological artefact of bourgeois society. For many feminists, these things have been artefacts of a masculine ideology, and in one of three essays here on the future of feminist criticism Susan Moran argues that

brilliantly as can be done, a reticence not just about history and language, but about any direction or coherency at all. In many ways Martin is radically digressive, Shandyan, oblique. His antecedents are not only the Bachelard of *La Connaissance approchée*, and in Martin's vertiginous exploitation of almost transcendental paradoxes and aporias one is reminded of a remarkable critic he does not cite but whose studies of allegory, Milton and Spenser anticipate his - Angus Fletcher.

Nevertheless, if knowledge and ignorance, statement and digression, exposition and repetition, circle and spiral, complete and incomplete, all melt into each other, why trouble to chronicle them at all? Borges says somewhere: "I used to marvel that the letters in a closed book did not get mixed up and lost in the course of the night." Exactly: and what keeps them there, so to speak, makes it possible for all critics to analyse their instabilities or "ludic play". Napoleon wrote about the Orient because he and his large team of scientists and soldiers could be there, despite Egyptian objections. That fact - it is one - is thoroughly consistent with Martin's analysis and not, as he quite wrongly says in a footnote, merely "polemical". Knowledge and Ignorance may not be detachable from each other, but they are enabled by circumstance, history, power and authority, which they enable in turn. That Martin should think this a reductive or inhibiting limitation on study is itself, I believe, a deep barrier to his thought which, I venture to suggest, would be freer and more interesting if it were removed. Or, to borrow a term from him, he ought to concede that the apparent reductiveness of historical and concrete thought could prove to be productive, as the many strengths of his curiously powerful performance in *The Knowledge of Ignorance* quite convincingly show.

as far as nineteenth-century British fiction is concerned, women's writings must be assigned to a central place in "the tradition" on the basis of the qualities they actually have. Most of the other pieces here, including Cecil Y. Lang on the biographical basis of episodes in Byron's *Dan Juan*, Marjorie Levinson on the contemporary politics behind Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, and Barbara Clarke Mosberg on "the daughter construct" in literature, are practical studies which have a good deal to offer general readers, but which serve in their present context mainly as ammunition for the book's polemical purposes.

These purposes are timely enough - but there are also certain important questions about them which this book itself does not raise. Restoring the sociohistorical dimension of literature is only one aspect of restoring the "aboutness" of literature that was eliminated with the rise of text-centred studies. If we are to let the genie of referentiality out of our critical bottle, we are also going to have to face some spiritually demanding questions about the truth of literature, or about its life - both in its own time and in the time we read it in. Why is it that Johnson or Coleridge or Eliot felt that they could (and should) berate their literary forebears for their failings, while the modern scholar-critic can - still, it seems - only read? Something is wrong, too, when an editor can tell us in his introduction that "scholarship ... is the ground of every form of critical self-consciousness". The ground? Imaginative insight has sometimes anticipated generations of scholarship - as it did, for example, in the case of Nietzsche. Surely what we need, if we are to read our past texts without excessively imposing our present interests on them is not - or not only - scholarship, but education (to which scholarship contributes something, but only something?)

In *Words after Speech: A comparative study of Romanticism and Symbolism* Paul Coxeter examines some of the continuities between Romantic, Symbolist and Post-Symbolist poetry in the United States, England, Germany, Poland, with reference to the works of Wordsworth, Shelley, Hölderlin, Novalis, Rilke, Höpflinger, and others.

